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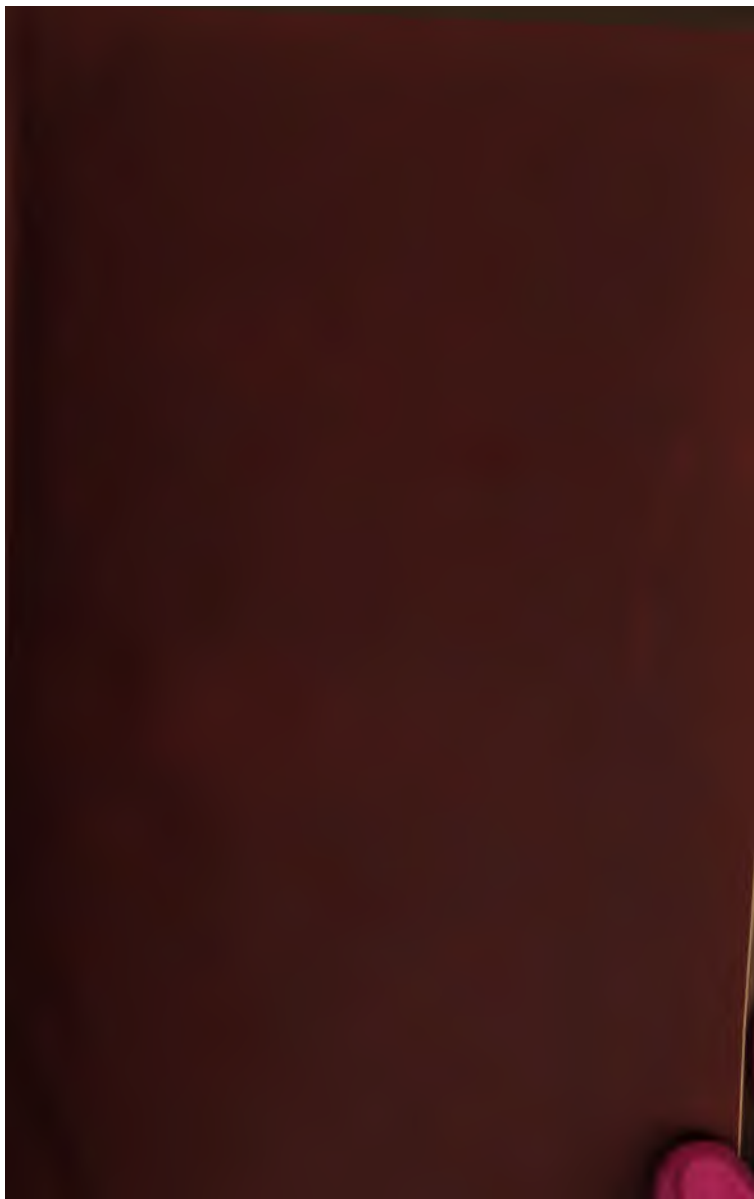
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RHODA AND ADELA,

THE COLONEL'S DAUGHTERS.

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RHODA AND ADELA,

The Colonel's Daughters.

A DOMESTIC TALE.

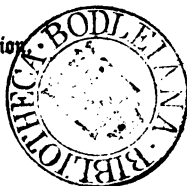
BY

MRS. CLERE,

AUTHORESS OF "THE APOSTLES OF JESUS," "BETHLEHEM'S THREE
MOTHERS," "THE LATTER DAYS OF JUDAH," ETC.

"A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband."—PROV. xii. 4.

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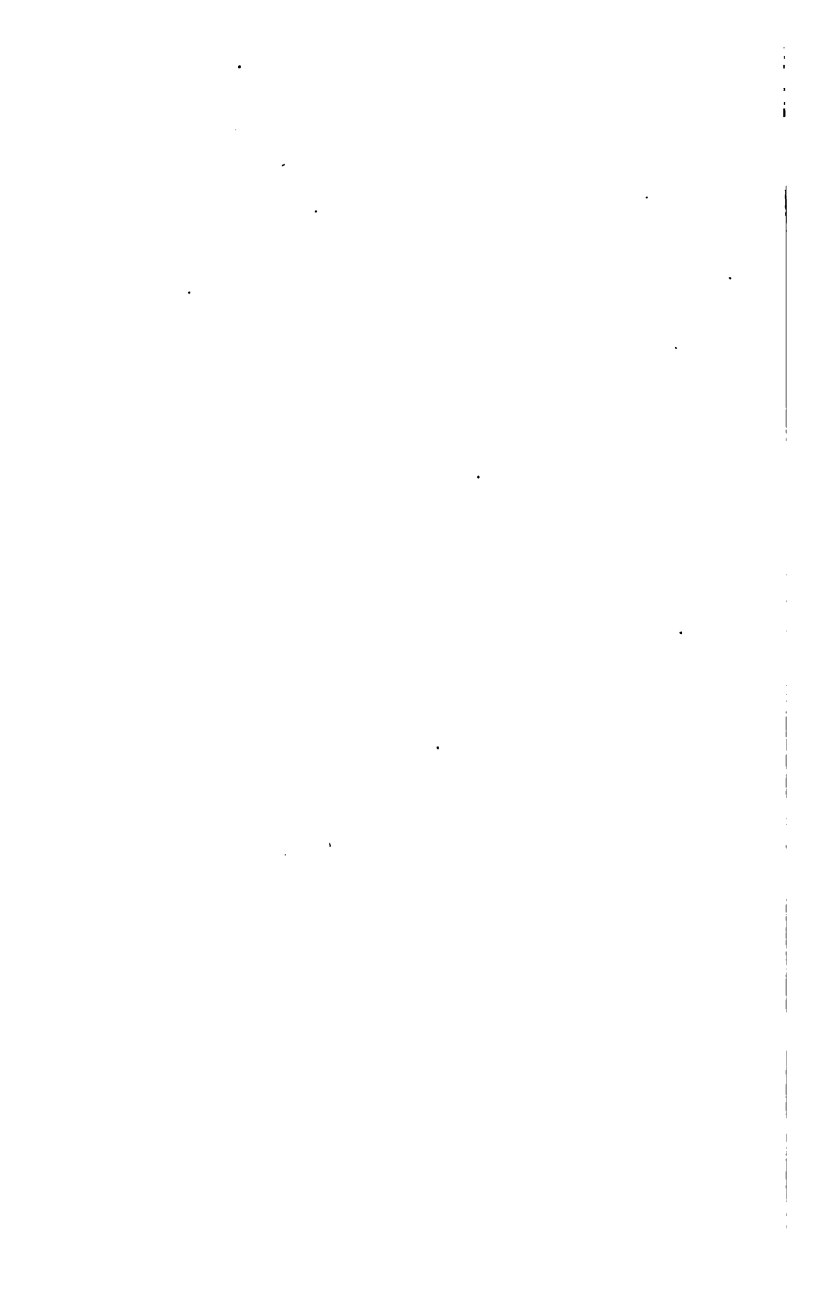


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RHODA AND ADELA,

THE

COLONEL'S DAUGHTERS.



CHAPTER I.



IN the north-western coast of England lies a small watering-place of the name of Lyth. As the country which bounds it is very flat and uninteresting, the less that is said about it the better; therefore we shall be spared the trouble of describing scenery any further than to remark that there are neither rocks, woods, nor waterfalls, to please the poet's or the painter's eye, or tempt the tourist to linger in the neighbourhood. Nay, we do not think the pedestrian could find even a shady lane within a mile of Lyth to saunter down, as the fields are mostly divided from one another by very unromantic embankments, which are no ornament,

and are indeed very unsightly to those accustomed to hedges full of roses, hawthorn, and honeysuckle.

And yet with these local disadvantages, Lyth is one of the prettiest watering-places in the north of England, and its inhabitants are so perfectly satisfied with their home that they believe nothing could improve it. Most of the gentle people live on what is called the "Beach," an elevated piece of ground immediately facing the sea. Some occupy large, handsome houses built of stone, others, pretty, modest villas that could not boast of any particular style of architecture but the light and fanciful one. The chief charm of each house, whether mansion or villa, is its garden. All is radiant throughout the summer with lovely plants, rarely seen in the open air at the seaside. The "village," in which reside those of the working class, fishermen chiefly, forms no small attraction to the stranger visiting Lyth. It is one long, broad street, running parallel with the "Beach," at the bottom of the back gardens of the "quality," as the gentle people are designated by their humbler neighbours. In the erection of the cottages which are uniform in design, effect has evidently been studied. They are semi-detached, each possessing that great addition to the labourer's dwelling, a substantial porch, proving ornamental as well as

useful. Each cottage has its flower-garden in front ; and with no less care does the poor fisherman's wife tend her little plot, and train her sweet smelling roses, jessamine, and honeysuckle over porch, door, and window, than does the lady on the "Beach" guard her choice exotics from treacherous winds and keen night air. The villagers, with few exceptions, are steady, honest, and industrious, and many of them sincere and consistent Christians, "not slothful in business ; fervent in spirit ; serving the Lord." But it had not always been so, and at the time the present beloved rector was presented to the living, the fishermen at Lyth were notorious as the roughest and most disorderly body of men in the North. We cannot enter into the details of all Mr. Fitzallen's exertions to create a reformation in his parish ; suffice it to say, that God blessed his pious efforts. The consciences of many were roused by his simple and earnest appeals ; and a longing to shake off their evil habits and begin life anew soon betrayed itself. Whilst the good rector laboured for the spiritual welfare of his humble parishioners, his friend and coadjutor the lord of the manor, Mr. Moir, was active in providing for their temporal comfort. One by one the dilapidated cottages were taken down to be replaced by new ones, and by degrees the "village," as we have described it, graced the once

unsightly spot, and Lyth became not only, as we said before, one of the prettiest watering-places in the north of England, but one of the happiest. The church, schools, and rectory stand at a distance of about a quarter of a mile from the "Beach" and "village:" and not far from them is Newstead, the seat of Squire Moir: and this short description will suffice, for although the opening scene of this story is at the rectory of Lyth, yet most of the events related in the history of "The Colonel's Daughters," occurred many, many miles away from this quiet, peaceful, and orderly spot.

With regard to the gentle people, it is only necessary to speak at length of the family at the rectory, as the few others mentioned at all are only done so incidentally.

The Rev. Charles Fitzallen was the younger son of a baronet. His father died shortly before his ordination, leaving two sons, Alfred, the present baronet, and Charles. The habits and tastes of the brothers differed very materially. Sir Alfred was of a rambling, restless disposition, ever seeking some new pleasure. He led a life of excitement and gaiety; whilst his studious brother loved quiet and retirement. Charles looked forward to a life of domestic peace, shared with one whom he could love and esteem. Sir Alfred sought to be dis-

tinguished for his stylish establishment, his handsome stud and elegant equipages. Mr. Fitzallen was preferred to the rectory of Lyth the same year that Mr. Moir succeeded to the family estate of Newstead. In the following spring both the rector and the squire called upon their friends to welcome their brides, who, being thrown together under such interesting circumstances, soon contracted a friendship for each other which ripened into a feeling of almost sisterly affection.

Within two years after their marriage, these beautiful young women stood at the baptismal font at the same time with two sweet infants ; and Amy Fitzallen and Adelaide Moir were together received into the Church of Christ. Then they were unconscious of each other's presence. In a few weeks afterwards they stared and crowed at each other ; a few months later they played together ; and from the hour they could first lisp each other's name no pleasure was deemed complete unless both shared it. Adelaide was the only child at Newstead ; but Mrs. Fitzallen became the happy mother of two girls and two boys, named Amy, Herbert, Alfred, and Constance. Time passed on and in due course the nursery at the rectory was deserted ; and when our story commences, the schooldays of Amy and Herbert were over. Amy Fitzallen was a tall, graceful, and very fair girl,

deeply imbued with religious feeling, refined and accomplished. She was her parents' joy and comfort. Herbert was eighteen months younger than his sister Amy. He was thoughtful and studious beyond his years, and was preparing for holy orders. Alfred, the next in age, was the life of the house, quick, impulsive, and generous, friendly with all, rich and poor ; his bright face, we may safely say, was welcome wherever he thought proper to show it. His Uncle Alfred, who never married, regarded him as his heir, and wished him in due time to enter the army. Constance, the youngest, was the image of her mother, and perhaps for this reason was the pet of her father, her sister, and her brothers. The mother displayed a special tenderness in her manner towards her sweet Amy, and often when she deemed herself unobserved would gaze with mournful interest upon her dear girl. Amy wondered why her mother was fond of arranging her long, flaxen curls and took but little notice of Conny's dark ringlets, and why her mother would sometimes hold one of the locks for a few seconds in her hand and then with a sigh lay it gently in its place, whilst Mr. Fitzallen, if he were present and observed what was passing, would put down his book or pen and at once commence an animated conversation. Plaintive songs also Amy noticed her mother never listened

to without visible emotion if she sung them, but the same songs produced no more than ordinary effect as far as Mrs. Fitzallen was concerned if sung by Adelaide Moir. Instinctive delicacy forbade Amy questioning her parents on these points, but she was persuaded that she herself, and a tale of sorrow, were associated in her mother's mind. Perhaps, she sometimes mused, my mother will, when I am a little older, tell me of her past trouble and let me sympathise with her ; so Amy waited and her patience was rewarded sooner than she had anticipated. Of the mother we must say a few words, and then we will to our story. It is impossible to imagine a human being more nearly approaching the model of a Christian gentlewoman than Mrs. Fitzallen, when we are first introduced to her. With a highly-gifted and cultivated mind she excelled in almost every female accomplishment. Devotedly fond of literature, and disdaining all frivolous works, she was familiar with most of the writings of the best authors. Thus in the study, the drawing-room, and in all social gatherings she was ever an acquisition. Her well-arranged household told how dear to her were the comfort and happiness of her family. Her husband loved her—how fondly, how deeply, he dare not fathom—while her children believed that the world contained not another like their good and beautiful mother. But

her large heart could not be confined within the narrow sphere of her home, and the joys and sorrows of her husband's parishioners she made her own. Especially among the poor, when sickness or trouble pressed heavily, the sympathy and aid of the rector's good wife were never wanting. Nor did she turn aside from the idle, the dissolute, and the profane, but with many a prayerful effort sought to bring them to the feet of that Saviour so precious to her own soul. Swerving neither to the right nor to the left from the path of duty, decided in every word and action, and naturally fond of power, she might have been somewhat too authoritative in manner, and consequently more feared than beloved, but for the Christian spirit in all its sweet beauty which governed her naturally imperious will ; and where pride, haughtiness, and austerity might have reigned, gentleness, meekness, patience, and charity triumphed. Though the one and twenty years of her married life had not passed without care, time had told lightly upon her person. Her figure had lost none of its natural grace and dignity, her thick, raven locks none of their glossy blackness, her full, dark eyes none of the brightness, and her complexion none of the rich tinge of health which had first attracted him who, soon loving her more for the beauties of her mind than of her person, wooed and won her for

his own ; ever afterwards to bless God for the *help-mect* He had given him.

It was spring, a particularly busy and happy season at the rectory always, but this year every one seemed especially to be fully occupied and more than ordinarily disposed to appreciate the beauties of nature in her new attire. Never had the garden looked more radiant, and the foliage in the shrubbery more refreshingly green ; not, however, to the invigorating season alone, must be attributed the excessive cheerfulness which reigned throughout the rectory. Herbert, after his first term at Oxford, was coming home for the vacation ; and for a fortnight before his arrival the inmates of the rectory seemed to be working for him alone ; the mother was, of course, full of business, consulting Herbert's taste in every particular ; the father fitted up a little study for his son, and the college friend Herbert was bringing with him ; Amy and Adelaide, for the latter was as one of the family, were in a constant flutter of excitement ; Alfred and Conny in the general commotion were left to their own resources, but they were not idle. For the greater part of the day before the arrival they became invisible, and where they hid themselves no one had time to inquire ; a trembling triumphal arch, however, over the gateway the next morning, told what their employment had been. In the

course of the morning Herbert and his friend Mr. Middleton passed under, or rather crept from beneath, the arch, for alas! no sooner had the gate swung on its hinges, than down came the "Welcome" with its leaves and flowers on the heads of the heroes of the day. Alfred and Conny were happily ignorant of the catastrophe, as they were at the moment in the belfry tugging at the ropes to ring a peal. There was one faint clang, which converted the smiles of the parish clerk, who was among the expectants at the rectory, into frowns, and he hastened to the church to drive away "them urchins" who were meddling with the ropes, little thinking that "them urchins" were two members of the ancient family of Fitzallen, bent upon doing honour to the future representative of the house. "Conny and I did our best, Herbert, to welcome you with as much—ahem—*éclat* as if you and Mr. Middleton had been just married, and no man or woman could have done more, so you must take the will for the deed." This sentimental speech was made by Alfred, when the family were separating for the night, and was received with a peal of laughter instead of the sympathy and thanks the speaker seemed to expect.

It was on the fourth morning after Herbert's return home, that Mr. Fitzallen, about ten o'clock,

received by a messenger a note, the contents of which evidently occasioned him no little surprise ; and after a brief consultation with his wife, he ordered his pony and was soon on the road to Chilston, a neighbouring village. Shortly after his departure Mrs. Fitzallen and Herbert were alone in the study, when Alfred burst into the room exclaiming, "Mother, where was my father riding off to at such a terrible speed just now?" "A note," replied Mrs. Fitzallen, "was brought to him, begging of him to hasten without delay to Chilston, as a friend was most anxious to see him. The writer said that he feared this friend, who is a confirmed invalid, would scarcely live throughout the day, and seemed in an agony lest your father should not arrive at Chilston in time."

"Is it a lady or a gentleman?"

"I do not know. The writer, Mr. Markham, said that the travellers arrived at the Swan the night before, and had intended, he believed, to have come straight here, but the horses were so jaded the postboy positively refused to take them a mile further until they had rested. As Chilston does not boast of any post-horses, the travellers were obliged to alight, intending to proceed the first thing in the morning, when the alarming illness of one of the party prevented them from carrying out their plan. I do not expect your

father back till late this evening. Clouds are gathering all around, and I much fear, there will be heavy rain before night ; I sincerely hope your father will escape the wet."

At that moment Mrs. Fitzallen's attention was attracted by the sight of a sailor crossing the lawn; and hurrying round to the back of the house.

"Williams," said she, addressing the servant, "go and see what Rimmer wants; he looks so pale and agitated I fear something serious has happened."

Williams obeyed his mistress, but as several minutes passed and he did not return, Mrs. Fitzallen, followed by her sons, went to the servants' hall. There they found the sailor, surrounded by all the domestics, telling some news which was evidently of a painful character. Upon seeing Mrs. Fitzallen his listeners fell back. Soon their mistress heard, with sorrow, that a child, the son of a fisherman, who had lately given way to habits of intemperance, had been drowned in the sea not half an hour before. The man's short story was this,—we give it in our own words: Hodge had been in a state of intoxication for several days, neglecting his wife and his only child, a boy four years old. His boat lay wrong side upwards on a small sand-bank which was uncovered, excepting when the tide was very high. Little Willie Hodge, his mother's only

earthly comfort, was a fine, intelligent boy. Like too many children of the labouring class he was often compelled to depend upon his own resources for amusement, and on this particular day had wandered alone to the shore. His mother entertained no anxiety about him, until George Rimmer, almost breathless, opened her door and exclaimed, "Mary Hodge, your little man will be drowned, he is in the sea!"

The distracted mother ran with all speed to the shore. She there found some fishermen pushing a boat as hurriedly as possible into the water.

"Where is my lad?" she called out.

"Look there," said one of the men, pointing with his finger.

The poor mother did look, and what a sight met her agonised gaze. In the midst of a rough sea was the sand-bank, almost covered with water; on it was her husband's boat, keel uppermost; across the top of it was seated her son. The child was perfectly unconscious of his danger, and seemed in the highest glee.

"Save him! Save him! Can you save him?" cried the wretched woman.

"We will try," said the men, "but in three minutes the bank will be covered;" and as they spoke they jumped into their boat, and pulled with all their might towards the poor child. But

the wind and waves were high, and the tide was against them. By this time a crowd had collected on the shore, and the eyes of all were fixed upon the delighted child. The men who had gone to the rescue made, notwithstanding their difficulties, rapid progress, and they began to entertain hopes that they might yet reach the bank in time, when a scream from the shore made them look behind them. They were not far from little Willie. The spray of a heavy wave had touched him. The little fellow was now frightened; he looked towards the shore, and held out his arms, as if imploring help. The sailors heard him distinctly call out, "Mother! mother!" The cry seemed to give them fresh strength, as they vigorously plied the oars. Then came a more piercing shriek from the shore. Again they looked round; but child, boat, and bank—all had disappeared. The waves dashed on, and sparkled, and roared, and danced, as they bore their victim to her who, with streaming eyes and clasped hands, watched their mad career; and, ere the sailors had landed after their fruitless errand, the corpse of the child was pressed to the almost equally inanimate bosom of the mother.

When Mrs. Fitzallen had heard Rimmer's account of the accident, she much regretted that the rector was not at home, as she was sure the be-

reaved mother must be in want of spiritual consolation.

"If you think me capable of performing such a task as that of comforting the mourner," said Herbert modestly, "I will go in place of my father."

"Nay, Herbert," was Mrs. Fitzallen's reply, "my duty is clear. I will go; you are too young for such an office, and a mother can best sympathise with the bereaved mother."

Much agitated, Mrs. Fitzallen, with as little delay as possible, set out on her errand of mercy. She walked very rapidly, as though every moment were precious. She entered the village, never more beautiful than at that season. Her wont was to saunter down the richly-perfumed street, stopping ever and anon to admire a lovely cottage flower, or notice by a smile or kindly greeting whoever among her true if humble friends she chanced to meet. But now all were unnoticed by her, and she started when close to Hodge's gate, an aged fisherman with tears streaming down his bronzed cheeks thus accosted her—"I am glad indeed to see you, ma'am, for you are sorely needed here; perhaps you can do more for her than the rector, you will know better how to deal with her, being a mother yourself." Not trusting herself to speak, Mrs. Fitzallen hurried up the garden walk. She

stood for a minute or two in the porch offering up a silent prayer, that God would direct her how to comfort the stricken one. She then entered the house, and beheld the poor mother sitting rigid, pale, and tearless, gazing intently at a little chair that was by the hearth, while a few perplexed and distressed women were vainly endeavouring to divert her attention from the vacant chair. Foot-steps flitting to and fro in the room above told that a melancholy but necessary task was being performed there. Greatly relieved by the appearance of Mrs. Fitzallen, more than one exclamation of thankfulness was heard as she entered the house. Acting solely from impulse she hurried across the room, laid her hand tenderly upon the poor mother's shoulder, and, bending her head down, merely uttered the word "Mary," but in such a tone that the latter started, lifted her eyes to the face of the speaker, and met a gaze so full of sympathy, affection, and pity, that the flood-gates of grief burst open, and tears—blessed relief to the breaking heart—rained down the pale cheeks of the mourner. For a few minutes sobs alone were heard in the cottage. At length Mary exclaimed, "Oh, my dear mistress, my boy, my beautiful Willie is gone, gone! Oh! where is my Willie?"

"Safe in the arms of Jesus," was the reply.

"Yes, safe, Mary, eternally happy with his Saviour. Oh, wish him not back again in this world of pain and sorrow."

"How can I help it?" said the poor woman in frantic tones; "my little love, my Willie, my only earthly comfort. You never knew sorrow like this; you do not know what I feel."

"But there is One above, my poor Mary, who knows your grief; look up to Him, lean on Him, He has been found more than sufficient for those bearing even a heavier load of grief than yours."

"Pray for me," was the faint response, after a few moments' silence.

"And you will pray with me, Mary."

As Mrs Fitzallen spoke she knelt down, her example being followed by all in the room, and an appeal, simple, fervent, and full of faith, rose from that house of sorrow, and was heard in heaven and answered. Mary rose from her knees strangely comforted, but much exhausted. She was laid on a couch or settle, and Mrs Fitzallen had the satisfaction before she left of seeing her sink into a calm slumber.

The threatening rain had now begun to fall, and Mrs Fitzallen was pleased to find that her close pony carriage was waiting for her at the gate. She had indeed reason to be glad that her children had been so thoughtful as to send the carriage, for

scarcely had she left the village when she caught a glimpse of Hodge, ghastly pale, and with an expression of agony on his face, running as though for his very life. She only saw him for a moment as he passed the carriage, and she instinctively shrank back, grateful for the friendly rain that had saved her, with her already overtaxed nerves, the trial of meeting the wretched father in his then excited state.

Upon reaching home Mrs Fitzallen gave a few instructions to a confidential servant, Mary Stretton, touching the funeral of the child and the mourning of the parents ; she intending to defray the expenses of both. She had left in the hands of the aged fisherman who had accosted her at Hodge's gate, and who was waiting at her carriage door when she left the cottage, a small sum to be expended in a few extra comforts for the bereaved mother. Not till she found herself in her own quiet room was she conscious how severely her nerves had been taxed. She sank on her couch quite exhausted ; but Amy, with characteristic forethought, had ready prepared for her a cup of her favourite beverage, chocolate, which revived her much.

"I will lie down now, love," she said, as Amy took from her the empty cup ; "a couple of hours' rest will quite renew my strength. Do not disturb me for luncheon. Adelaide is spending the day

here, is she not? I fear our guests will find it dull, for there is little prospect of any out-door amusement this afternoon. Stay, dear "——

A sudden thought had struck her. She rose from her couch and went into the adjoining room, the rector's study. She returned presently, carrying a thick roll of papers, which she handed to Amy, a peculiar expression of sadness at the same time passing over her speaking countenance.

"Tell Herbert," she said, "to read that manuscript to you. Your father wrote it during that long winter he was confined to the house for three months. His self-imposed task wiled away many an hour that but for it would have been very irksome. He never intended to publish the manuscript, but did not consider the time it occupied idly spent, for he knew his children would value it some day, and he hoped would derive profit from its perusal. I have not read it myself; your father had reasons for wishing me not to do so."

"Why, mamma, have you not given it us before?" inquired Amy almost reproachfully.

"I cannot now explain the reason why, my child; perhaps it was selfishness on my part," and again the expression of pain appeared, and Amy forbore asking more questions on the subject. "The story," said her mother, "is about two sisters. It may not interest Mr. Middleton, but he told me

at breakfast that he had several letters that he wished to write to-day, so if he prefer it he can, whilst Herbert is reading aloud, betake himself to what Alfred calls the 'Consulting-room,' and Mrs. Fitzallen smiled, for so far the little room that had been fitted up for the collegians had been chiefly used as an apartment in which the young people could assemble, and undisturbed arrange their places for the day as regarded excursions by land and by water.

The bell for luncheon was now heard. Amy arranged her mother's pillows, kissed her lovingly, and then left her to enjoy the rest she so much needed. With a countenance expressive almost of pleasure, which rather puzzled the sad-looking little party already assembled, Amy entered the dining-room and laid the rolled papers on the side table.

"What have you got there?" eagerly asked inquisitive Conny.

"Wait until luncheon is over, and we are again in the drawing-room," replied Amy, "then your curiosity shall be abundantly satisfied. But where is Alfred?" she continued, as her eye fell upon her brother's vacant place.

"No one in the house knows where he is," said Conny rather impatiently, "he has not been seen for the last three hours. We cannot wait luncheon for him. You have a treat in store for us, for you

look as if nothing had happened, and I am sure we have been miserable enough thinking and talking of poor little Willie," and the tears again started to the speaker's eyes.

Luncheon over, all adjourned to the drawing-room, and Amy in very few words told what she knew about the manuscript.

"So, Herbert," she concluded, "will you begin to read it at once? You may perhaps finish it before papa and his mysterious friends arrive. And you, Mr. Middleton, can, if you wish to do so, retire to your study and write your letters."

"Nay, Miss Fitzallen," replied Mr. Middleton, "I am as curious as your sister is to know the contents of your father's manuscript, so you must allow me to remain."

The girls had brought out their embroidery; and Herbert had just opened the roll, when Alfred, overheated and evidently very tired, suddenly made his appearance and threw himself with a sigh of relief on the sofa.

"Where have you been, and what have you been doing to tire yourself so much, Alfred dear?" asked Amy.

Without waiting for a reply the affectionate girl left the room, and very shortly returned with a plate of beautiful strawberries, saying, as she handed the tempting fruit to her brother, "Eat

these. We will not listen to a word you have to say until you have done so. You look quite jaded."

Alfred needed no persuasion.

"Heigho ! Herbert," he exclaimed as he laid down the plate on which not a strawberry was left. "Going to read them a homily this wet afternoon ; a pretty long one, I think, and according to your opinion, a deeply interesting one. I have been watching your countenance for the last ten minutes as you have been dipping into first one part and then another. Come, Amy, make the pillows comfortable, I must have a *siesta* ; I feel thoroughly done up for once, and you, Conny, awaken me when Herbert has finished the twentieth head ; I shall have slept long enough by that time."

"Stay, Alfred," said Conny hurriedly. "Don't go to sleep till you have told us where you have been. We have not seen you since you were in the servant's hall listening to Rimmer's sad story."

"Blundell," replied Alfred, "called me aside and asked me if I would be so kind as just to run over to William Hodge's (you know he lives only three miles off), and tell him that his little grandson had just '*gone out*.' He paid me the compliment of saying that I could manage the job in a roundabout way, and not blurt it out like a village youngster."

"And how did they take it?" was asked by more than one in the room.

Alfred dared not trust himself to attempt to tell how, after the worthy couple had welcomed him with smiling faces, and then, when they saw from his countenance that something sad had happened, concluded at once that their son in his drunken fury had committed an act of violence, and how, when by degrees they knew the worst, the grandmother, as though she had been struck a deadly blow, sank on the ground, and how her husband, trembling for the life of his beloved wife, bade her master her grief.

"Remember, Ruth," he sobbed, "he is safe and happy with the Lord. Think, Ruth, how short his journey has been ; he has no long weary pilgrimage before him like that we have travelled. We shall not be long after him ; and if we could but see our poor George a changed man, we would not care how soon we reached the end, and something tells me that our prayers for George will be answered before long. Maybe the Lord is dealing with him now. Thee knowest that our lad is not bad at the bottom ; it is the drink that does it, and maybe this will be a lesson he will never forget. Look up, Ruth ; if Willie's death brings his father on his knees, we may bless God for this day's work. There now, you are better a

bit. The van will be passing soon, could you not go with me to Lyth? The poor mother will want our help, and maybe George is blaming himself too much and getting desperate, for he was (when he was sober) as fond and proud of Willie as any father could be."

The poor man could bear up no longer, but burying his face in his hands, gave way to uncontrollable grief; for Willie—a noble little fellow—was the only child of his only son, and had been during his short life a bright sunbeam on the dark path of sorrow the drunken father had of late beaten for the young wife and his parents. A neighbour or two who had heard the news came to offer their services, and Alfred returned to Lyth, resolving to repeat to the younger Hodge every word his father had uttered.

"And if that does not mend him nothing will," said the excited boy half aloud more than once on his way home.

All this was known at the Rectory only by degrees, and both Amy and Conny were much concerned at their brother's deep emotion as he lay with his face hidden in the cushion. With sisterly sympathy, each in her own peculiar way tried to comfort him. Their efforts, however, met with no very gracious reception, for Alfred, rather irritated than otherwise, begged to be left alone, or

Mr. Middleton would think him a greater woman than he was.

"It would be better, indeed," said Mr. Middleton, attempting in vain to look serious; "I quite understand Alfred's feelings. Fitzallen," he continued, addressing himself to Herbert, "we are anxious for you to begin your afternoon's task at once. Your brother will soon be composed and asleep when he finds our attention is drawn from him."

Herbert was so absorbed in the manuscript that he had not been observing what was passing. Amy and Conny, following Mr. Middleton's advice, returned to their seats, but Herbert still continued to rapidly glance down one page after another of the manuscript, till he was effectually checked by Conny exclaiming—

"Now, is it not provoking, he will know all the plot, and will have no interest in the tale when he reads it aloud."

"On the contrary, most knowing Conny," said Herbert, "though I was acquainted with the plot fully ten minutes ago, my interest in the tale has been increasing every second since, and as I wish you all to be likewise interested, it may be as well to inform you that one of the heroines is the beloved wife of the respected Rector of Lyth, and the happy mother of four on the whole tolerably well-behaved

children. You will know her in this manuscript as Rhoda Elliott."

"Oh, grandpapa!" said Conny in great delight. "The beautiful east window in our church, Mr. Middleton, is in memory of him."

"Conny means," said Herbert, laughing, "that Elliott was our grandfather's name, not that Rhoda Elliott was our grandfather."

"And do you really mean to say," said Amy, "that the tale is about mamma when she was a girl?"

"It is, and the writer, I should think, had no intention of disguising the fact. If he had he is a poor hand at mystery. However, I had better begin, and if you do not meet with many personal friends in the tale you will meet with some familiar names. But I never heard of an Adela in our family," and Herbert began again to turn over the leaves.

"Really, Herbert," said Conny, "you are bent upon trying our patience."

"Oh, I beg your pardon, I am very rude." And with this brief apology the rather bewildered Herbert began to read as follows.

CHAPTER II.



IT was on a sultry afternoon about the middle of August, that Colonel Elliott and his two daughters, Rhoda and Adela, set off for a ramble in the neighbourhood of —, at which town the Colonel, with his regiment, had arrived a day or two before. Through fields delicious with the scent of hay and newly-mown grass, through woods filled with the sweet songs of birds, through lanes rich with every variety of wild flower, the happy little party strolled, each turn in their path inviting them to prolong their walk, till the fear lest Mrs. Elliott, the wife and mother, might be anxious compelled them to turn their faces homewards.

Not far, however, had they retraced their steps when the Colonel, thinking that he could find a shorter route, took a different one from that he had before pursued, and only succeeded in becoming bewildered, and at a point where three roads met did not know which to take. As it happened, he tried the wrong one, and after wandering about

some time, was really thankful to be directed by a farmer into the right one. He was now impatient to hasten home and relieve his wife from the anxiety he knew his long absence would be occasioning her. The girls, however, especially the younger one, were too much fatigued to proceed but very slowly. At length, when they were crossing a hay-field half a mile from the town, Adela was so exhausted that she was obliged to sit down. Seeing how pale and wearied she looked, her father desired her sister to remain near her whilst he procured a carriage.

Rhoda sat down on the pile of hay which Adela had chosen for a couch, and placed her arm around her sister, who in a few minutes was asleep. Rhoda, feeling a drowsiness creeping over her, began in a low voice to sing, hoping thus to keep herself awake. She could not, however, resist the combined influence of fatigue and an oppressive atmosphere, and soon she also was unconscious of what might be passing near her.

A painter would have loved to gaze on the sisters as they slept. Rhoda was a brunette, her features were regular, her long black eyelashes rested upon her cheek, her eyebrows were strongly marked, her forehead was lofty, her black shining hair was simply parted down the middle in front and all collected in a heavy roll behind. Adela

was the greatest contrast to her sister. As she lay with her head resting on Rhoda's breast, her long flaxen curls half covered her face and hung in loose tresses down to her waist; her complexion was dazzlingly fair, and she was altogether very lovely. In disposition the elder sister was decided, energetic, and self-willed; that of the younger gentle, yielding, and inclined to indolence; but here the disparity ended. Trained by their pious parents in the love and fear of God, the precepts of the holy Bible were the rule of their daily life; and though either of them might occasionally be thrown off her guard and yield to her peculiar weakness, both were equally incapable of deliberately offending their Heavenly Father, or of causing their fond parents a moment's uneasiness. They were both tall for their age. The elder was in her fifteenth year and her sister's senior by eighteen months. The carriage of Rhoda was dignified inclining to haughtiness, that of Adela soft and graceful in every movement.

They had not long slept in the hay-field, when a lady, with slow and languid steps, approached the spot where they lay. She looked for a second or two upon them, and an expression of anguish passed over her wan face. She clasped her hands, and raising her eyes to heaven murmured—

“Father, forgive me if I am not wholly Thine.

Teach me to resign these, my beloved children, into Thy care. Would that it were Thy will that I should be spared a few years to watch over them; yet not my will, but Thine be done."

And the loving mother pressed her hand upon her heart, as if by so doing she could check its painful throbbing. But a mother's feeling would not be at once subdued, and she could not look with composure upon the children she felt she would soon leave for ever in this world. She turned away, and seating herself on a bank, gave way to a burst of uncontrollable sorrow.

Colonel Elliott shortly afterwards arrived with the carriage, which he left at the gate, and entering the field, was not a little alarmed at seeing his wife in an attitude of grief. He hastened to her, and laying his hand gently on her shoulder, said—

"Adela, dearest, what is the matter?" and the fond husband put his arm round her to raise her drooping figure. "Adela," continued he, "tell me, I implore you, are you very ill?"

A deep groan was his only answer, and he saw that some grief oppressed her heart too great to be expressed. Soon, however, she became calmer, and, praying fervently for help from above, she for the first time told her husband that it was her conviction that in a few short weeks, perhaps, less, she would be gone from all she loved here.

At first he tried to smile at her fears, but the solemn tone with which she assured him that she was not mistaken alarmed him; and when he looked at her pale and sunken cheeks and pointed features, he wondered how he had been blind so long. Always delicate, often through debility almost confined to her couch for weeks together, the change in her appearance had been so gradual that no one, not even the affectionate husband, had noticed that the fair flower was indeed fading away.

When once alarmed, however, not an hour he felt must be lost in arresting, if possible, the progress of the disease, which she herself believed was a fatal one, but which the Colonel trusted would yield to medical skill.

He awoke his daughters, and soon the sorrowful little party were at home again.

An eminent physician was at once consulted, and from him the anxious husband learned that his wife's case was indeed a hopeless one, consumption having claimed her as its victim. A residence in Madeira might, however, with God's blessing, prolong her life for months or even years. Without delay, therefore, the dear invalid was taken to Funchal the capital, where she lingered two years, her fatal disease making slow but sure progress.

Rhoda and Adela never for a day left their mother after she had bidden, as it proved, a last

farewell to her native land, and the Colonel was fortunately able to be with his loved ones watching with inexpressible grief his dearest treasure gradually decay. It was long after she knew that she must leave them—how soon who could tell?—that the dying woman could with composure think of her daughters, motherless and without any settled home, or a tried Christian friend to act a mother's part towards them.

Highly educated and accomplished, and never so happy as when with her children, and debarred on account of her delicate health from entering into society excepting on a very limited scale, Mrs. Elliott had devoted herself to the education of Rhoda and Adela, believing that the instruction of no hired governess could be equal to that of their loving and anxious mother. But when weakness compelled her to seek the assistance of professors and a daily governess, she much regretted that she had not, before leaving England, secured the services of an accomplished Christian gentlewoman; but all that she could do now was to extract a promise from her husband, that his first care on their return home would be to secure such a guardian for his motherless daughters.

From the hour the promise was wrung from the lips of the almost heart-broken husband, the constant prayer of the invalid was, that God would

direct to the widower's home one in every way worthy of such a precious charge. It would seem as though a blessed assurance was given her that her prayer would be answered, for all anxiety touching the temporal welfare of her children disappeared, and she was able to resign them without a fear into the hands of the Father of all.

As her weakness increased, she gradually disappeared from the sight of those English residents at Funchal, who, though not knowing her personally, had from their first arrival taken a lively interest in the dying mother and her children. Less and less frequently was Colonel Elliott's carriage met on the public drives. Then, only in the balcony of her own boudoir, might the interesting and lovely invalid be seen reclining on a couch, and evidently rapidly fading away; and then in vain was she looked for, and it was whispered abroad that she would never leave the house again. But she lingered for weeks after she had been seen for the last time in the balcony, and was able until within a fortnight of her decease to lie near the open window of her boudoir, gazing upon the deep blue firmament, and listening to the dull beat of the waves and their ripple on the strand, and she would speak with rapture of the hour drawing so near when her spirit would soar to the home of

light and love her Saviour had prepared for her. Sometimes she would lie with her eyes closed, so motionless, and her colourless face so like chiselled marble, and yet wearing an expression of heavenly peace, such as no sculptor could have given it, that her anxious watchers longed, yet feared to disturb her, believing that she was gently passing away, and that, already within sight of the shores of eternity, her eyes had for ever closed upon all earthly scenes.

But the longing soul was not permitted to quit its earthly tenement without a severe struggle, and for many days before its release the sufferings of the poor worn-out body, though borne with the utmost patience and resignation, were most distressing to witness.

It was no wonder that after the dear invalid was wholly confined to her bed her husband or children were, when not in the sick-room, generally to be found in the boudoir endeared to them by many an hour of past happiness never to be recalled. There they met to weep and to pray for strength to bear their heavy trial, and to pray also that the sufferings of the dying saint might not be prolonged, and to comfort each other with the assurance so often given them by her who was entering the dark valley that all was well.

“My foot is on the Rock ; all is peace, peace.

My precious Saviour is sufficient for me," she would repeat when, after a paroxysm of pain, her eyes met the distressed gaze of her family.

At length the struggle was over, and for a couple of hours before her departure the worn-out body was at rest. Colonel Elliott was alone with his loved one in her last moments. Supported by her almost heartbroken husband, she lay with her head resting on his breast. There were no more tossings, no more pain. The Colonel longed to break the solemn stillness. Would she pass away without one last farewell.

"Adela," he whispered.

She raised her eyes to his, and in the glazing orbs he read her wish. Lifting her in his arms he pressed his lips to hers and received her dying kiss. He then gently laid her head on her pillow; her lips moved; he caught the words, "I come, blessed Saviour," and then her happy spirit took its flight, leaving a smile of ineffable sweetness on the pallid face.

Some time must have elapsed after death had taken place before Colonel Elliott rang the bell. Mary answered it; and into her hands the newly-made widower resigned the lifeless form of his wife.

Whilst the last scene was taking place in their mother's room, Rhoda and Adela were seated in

the balcony of the little parlour, now speaking of her who was ever in their thoughts, then with their eyes raised as though they would penetrate the deep blue expanse before them, they were lost in the contemplation of the glories of that home their mother was about to enter.

"Would that I could go with her!" exclaimed Adela, clasping her hands. "Oh that I had wings like a dove, then"—the poor girl burst into a violent fit of weeping.

"Nay, Adela," said Rhoda, whose pale face and sunken eyes told how willingly she also would be at rest; "there is work for us here. You and I must forget ourselves; there will be one left who will need our care, and we must pray not to be taken with dear mamma, but for strength to comfort our poor father."

And as she spoke she withdrew her arm from round her sister's waist; and, rising from her seat, walked with firm step and erect carriage to the farther end of the balcony, as though resolved to shake off her grief and prepare herself for the task before her. Not, however, in her own strength would she confide; and clasping her hands she prayed fervently for divine help.

It was whilst thus engaged that she heard footsteps behind her. She looked round. It was her father. He was deadly pale. He tried to speak,

but his lips refused to utter a word. He pointed upwards, and Rhoda knew that she was motherless.

The blow, though so long expected, had come at last suddenly, and the poor girl for a few minutes staggered under it. Her father led her, faint and trembling, into the parlour, and then hastened to complete his painful task, for Adela had neither seen him enter the balcony nor with Rhoda quit it. She was at the moment leaning slightly over the railing, watching a sea-bird skim swiftly across the waters ; and as her eyes followed its rapid flight she involuntarily sang snatches of her mother's favourite anthem, " Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest." The breaking of the waves on the beach prevented her hearing footsteps on the balcony.

The Colonel approached within a few paces of her, and then his courage failed him. The slight, girlish figure of his beloved child, the soft golden ringlets fluttering in the breeze, and the exquisitely sweet voice all combined to unnerve him. A deep groan, as he sank on a chair near, was the first intimation Adela received of his presence. We will not dwell longer on the painful scene.

In the course of the evening, Rhoda and Adela were permitted to see the lifeless form of their all but idolised mother. Colonel Elliott led them to the bed, on which lay the remains of his loved one.

Adela, half supported by her father, trembled like an aspen leaf, and showers of tears ran down her pale cheeks. Rhoda stood alone, her nerves were strung to the utmost, not a tear was seen; but the compressed lips, the blanched cheek, and the agonised look which fell upon the marble features as the Colonel removed the covering from them, told how intense was her grief.

For a few minutes the three gazed upon the lovely face, beautiful in life but even more beautiful in death, wearing as it did the expression of the most perfect rest and peace. Rhoda stooped down as though she would kiss the closed lips.

"Not yet," said her father, laying his hand upon her shoulder, and gently holding her back. "Let us pray."

Then was Rhoda no longer able to control her feelings; she knelt down, and, hiding her face in her hands, sobbed aloud.

For several months past Mrs. Elliott had been compelled, on account of her great debility, to retire to rest at a very early hour of the evening, and until within the last fortnight it had been the Colonel's practice to meet his children, and their only English attendant, Mary Stretton, in his wife's room, read a chapter of the Bible and pray, sometimes making use of a book of family devotions,

but more frequently offering up an extemporary prayer. Immediately after the short service was over, Rhoda and Adela kissed their parents, and as a rule went direct to their own room.

The great suffering and extreme restlessness of the invalid after she was wholly confined to her bed had precluded all possibility of united family worship in her presence, but now the worn-out body lay silent and motionless in its last deep sleep, and again the father and his children knelt together in the hallowed chamber. For a few minutes Rhoda wept unrestrainedly ; but the words, repeated in a decided tone, " Let us pray," checked her sobs.

A short silence followed, and then the Christian soldier offered up a prayer, so touching in its patience, resignation, and thankfulness, that the afflicted girls caught his spirit, and lifting up their heads were able to respond to every petition. For himself, he prayed that God would help him in guiding the course of his motherless daughters, and for them he prayed that they might follow in the steps of her whose immortal soul was now rejoicing with her Saviour, whom she had ever held most precious. He thanked God for having called his loved one to Himself, for the years of happiness he had been permitted to share with her, and for the support she had been able, through the great

measure of grace bestowed upon her, to afford him in his hours of weakness and temptation.

With minds elevated and comforted, the sisters rose from their knees ; and after imprinting each a kiss on their mother's icy brow, and receiving from their father his blessing for the night, they left him alone with his dead.

According to Mrs. Elliott's dying request, her body was brought to England to be interred in her husband's family vault. So, very shortly after her decease, the mourners, with the precious remains, set sail for England. When all the sad ceremonies connected with the funeral were over, Rhoda, with characteristic energy, undertook the management of the little household, endeavouring by every means in her power, to cheer her father and Adela, whose spirits continued painfully depressed.

But the Colonel was not long in observing that his unselfish child was taxing her strength too far, and he speedily took steps to relieve her from a portion of her arduous duties. His desire was to meet with an accomplished lady who would be willing to undertake the completion of his daughters' education, and at the same time superintend the domestic affairs of his small establishment. Providence—some would have called it accident—introduced him to a lady in every way adapted for such a position.

Madame de Richelet, for such was her name, was the widow of General de Richelet, an officer in the service of the unfortunate Louis the Sixteenth. Before her marriage she was looked upon as a protégée of Marie Antoinette, and, whether in public or private, was a constant and favourite attendant upon the royal person. After her union with General de Richelet, she retired to a beautiful château on the banks of the Seine, about three miles from Paris. Her rather delicate health rendered her, in some respects, unfit for her position as the wife of a soldier; but when her husband could leave his arduous duties to join her in her retreat, then the days fled away too quickly for the happy couple, and at certain seasons she might be seen in the *salons* of the palace at Versailles. Then the proud husband knew that of all the beauties of the French court none surpassed his fair Louise.

It was, however, seldom that she formed one of the giddy throng. She loved not such scenes. She had, therefore, ample opportunity for cultivating her rich mind, and consequently excelled in every accomplishment. Her time would, indeed, have been fully occupied had she, in her husband's absence, devoted it wholly to her favourite authors, her music, and her drawing; but knowing that God had placed her there to be as far as possible a

CHAPTER II.

...the same portion of each
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...the instruction.
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...Many a poor
...the afflictions
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...and only one
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...who can tell
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...the
...however, wanted this excel-
...the great French
...Madame de Richelet
...A few short days found
...and without a friend
...devered servant of her husband, who

had, humanly speaking, been the means of saving her life. He had arrived at the château, breathless with terror, to tell her of the dreadful scenes that were taking place in the city ; his master had sent him with all speed to Madame de Richelet, desiring him to give into her own hand a slip of paper, on which were written these words : " If you value me, fly ! Jacque will be your protector. I must escape in another direction. Farewell ! my beloved. May God bless you ! Henri."

The servant told her in a very few words that his master, who was at Versailles, had given him some directions ; amongst others, to tell her from him that if she lingered at the château he should be obliged to hasten to her protection, which would peril the lives of both, as he, so well known, could not expect to escape the infuriated mob. This was enough for the affectionate wife, and in an hour she, in the disguise of a peasant, had left for ever her beautiful home. She with many other refugees reached the English shores, and soon the heartrending news came that her husband had fallen in endeavouring to facilitate the flight of his unhappy king.

Poor Madame de Richelet ! her cup of sorrow seemed full. It was long before she could raise her head, for continually sad tales were told of friends having fallen victims to popular rage.

Perhaps the two friends next to her husband who stood nearest her heart were her queen, Marie Antoinette, and the Princess de Lamballe. She had, whilst occupying a post of honour near the queen, been always treated by her royal mistress with kindness, and had often received from her proofs of even affection, so that the grateful Louise would willingly have laid down her life to have saved that of her sovereign. It was with a heart bursting with indignation and anguish that she read of the murder of the Princess de Lamballe, and of the execution of the ill-fated Louis and Marie, and she half resolved never again to touch the soil of her wretched country.

But time softens every grief, and after a while Madame de Richelet began to regain peace of mind. She had been in England some years, supporting herself by her own exertions, when she fell under the notice of Colonel Elliott, who at once secured her services for his daughters. By degrees he gathered from her her sad history, and, in addition, that all her husband's estates had been confiscated, but that she herself inherited from her father certain lands which she believed had been totally overlooked; and she mentioned the part of France in which these small estates lay scattered.

Colonel Elliott bore this information carefully in mind. One day he overheard a conversation

between two distinguished French refugees, in which one of them mentioned that the inhabitants of a certain town were secret favourers of the Bourbons. The Colonel knew that this town was Madame de Richelet's birthplace, so he hastened to her, and after a long consultation, a correspondence was entered upon between the Colonel and one or two of the principal parties, named by Madame de Richelet as having lived near her father, which ended very satisfactorily.

The property had not been confiscated ; and though through neglect it had almost gone to ruin, if skilfully managed it would yet produce a considerable income. Friends were still living who interested themselves in the matter, and it was not long before the poor refugee received her first remittance. Perhaps this would not have been so easily effected had it not been for the change which was taking place in the aspect of public affairs in France.

Madame de Richelet was truly grateful to Colonel Elliott ; and though now independent, begged earnestly, as a slight return for his kindness, to be allowed still to retain her position in his family, saying that it would be an act of charity to comply with her wishes, for if her time were fully occupied she would have none to spare for painful reflections. The Colonel was only too happy to

agree to such an arrangement, for not only were his daughters much attached to Madame, and had under her tuition made most satisfactory progress in their studies, but they were of an age to especially require a judicious guardian and chaperon.

Rhoda had now entered upon her eighteenth year, but had no desire to be released from the authority of Madame de Richelet. She felt and acknowledged the wisdom and ability displayed by her friend and governess in every department of the little household, and knew how incompetent she herself was to take the place of the gifted and experienced widow in the superintendence of domestic matters. Moreover, she and Adela really loved Madame de Richelet, and would have been much distressed if they had been called upon to part with her.

Their home had again assumed an air of cheerfulness ; and no marvel, for love was the spirit which ruled each member of it. The sisters devoted their energies to the comfort and happiness of their father, and his tastes and wishes were consulted in all their pursuits.

During the day the Colonel's professional duties wholly occupied his time, and from early morning
his daughters seldom saw him ; but, as business of the day was over, there was
on his brother officers could place

before him strong enough to induce him to remain one hour longer from his children than necessary.

How swiftly passed those evenings ; there was on the part of the girls so much to tell and to display to their fond and, I must add, proud father, that the two uninterrupted hours after the late dinner passed far too swiftly to accomplish half that had been designed for the evening's amusement. Rhoda was a skilful musician, also a good linguist ; with her the Colonel conversed in French, German, and Italian. Adela had an exquisite voice, and her father was never weary of hearing her sing his favourite songs. Both of the girls painted beautifully, and the Colonel seemed especially interested in their progress as artists. And there was many a case of distress discussed, and plans formed for the relief of the sufferers, and there were cheering tales to be told of the success of their benevolent efforts among the poor and destitute. And every night before he closed his eyes the Colonel thanked God for having given his motherless children such an instructress and guardian as the good and gifted Madame de Richelet.

It was unfortunate for Rhoda and Adela that circumstances at length occurred which rendered a breaking up of their father's establishment indis-

pensable. Louis the Eighteenth had ascended the French throne, and Bonaparte had retired to Elba. Now that all obstacles were removed, Madame de Richelet wished once more to visit her native country. She yearned to behold again the scenes of her youth, to see if aught remained of her beautiful château; and above all she longed to meet with some one, if *one* still remained, who had known her in her happier days. When she told her charges of her intended departure, they at once expressed an ardent wish to accompany her.

Madame de Richelet was really delighted at the idea of having such travelling companions, and Colonel Elliott's consent was easily obtained; for he feared his regiment would soon be ordered abroad, and he was very unwilling to remove his daughters from under the care of their excellent guardian. The preparations for their journey were quickly made, but when the time came to bid their father farewell their hearts almost failed; and it was with a mixture of pleasure and pain that they stepped into the carriage which was to convey them as far as Dover. Little or nothing worthy of note occurred during the journey, and in due time they reached Paris. Few were the friends Madame de Richelet met. She wished to live perfectly retired, and inquired from strangers the names of the parties at court. Only two or three of her old

companions were in the city, too many had fallen in the Revolution, and many had died in exile, for more than twenty years had passed over Madame de Richelet's head since she had fled from her château on the Seine. The children of some were in attendance upon Louis, but to these she almost preferred being unknown, as an introduction to them might lead her into public notice, which she wished to avoid. The old friends, however, who remained, she received with open arms at her hotel, and many were the hours of conversation which passed between them; and how interesting was the subject! all of it relating to the last days of Louis and Marie, and many of their devoted subjects.

Rhoda and Adela were of great service to their guardian, for at times she was so overpowered with excessive emotion, that had it not been for her companions, who frequently diverted her mind from its own sorrows, she would have sunk altogether. For their sakes she strove against her grief, and often succeeded in becoming even cheerful.

Their curiosity was abundantly gratified, for she took them almost wherever they wished. One day was spent in paying a visit to what was formerly the village in which her own beloved home lay, but neither château nor peasants' cottages remained.

She asked a passing stranger what had become of them. His answer was, "All destroyed in the Revolution." He pointed to a piece of ground on which the château had stood, but not one vestige, excepting some black shapeless stones, of the building remained.

Madame de Richelet could not speak: after looking with an expression of deep sorrow for a minute or two upon some broken fragments of masonry that lay scattered around her, and which doubtless had formed part of the château, a new idea seemed to strike her, and she hurried away from the spot on which she and the young ladies stood without saying a word.

In astonishment the sisters followed her, till a sudden turn in the road brought them in sight of an object which caused Madame de Richelet to utter a scream of joy. This was a small but beautiful cemetery, which General de Richelet had made entirely at his own expense. It was the burial-place of the inhabitants of the château and of the peasants of the village. It was surrounded by massive iron railings, and had during the General's lifetime been kept in exquisite order. The choicest flowers were cultivated in it. The young looked upon it as a perfect little paradise, and the aged thought how sweet it would be to rest at last in such a lovely spot.

In silence the trio entered this abode of the dead. There were but few graves ; and, with the exception of one, these were only to be distinguished by the stone standing upright at the head of each, and which were chiefly those of the children cut off by the epidemic which had proved fatal to La Belle Marie, as the peasants had always called the lovely infant of General and Madame de Richelet. In one corner of the cemetery was the tomb of this precious child. It was composed of white marble, and on the top were engraved the name and age of the deceased, beneath which were, when translated, these lines :—

“ Sleep, baby, sleep ! for though no mother’s breast
Is now thy pillow, thou may’st safely rest
In thy dear Saviour’s arms, and He will keep
Thee safe. Then sleep, most blessed infant, sleep !
Till the last day, when as an angel fair
Thou shalt awake, an angel’s bliss to share.”

The bereaved mother knelt for some minutes on the ground and offered up a prayer of thankfulness that this sacred spot had been spared. She then rose, and without trusting herself to speak, led the sisters to the tomb.

After Rhoda and Adela had examined every part of this interesting monument, they assisted Madame de Richelet in gathering some of the “lilies of the valley” which grew in profusion

around, and having, according to the French custom, made a wreath of the flowers, they suspended it on a branch of a weeping willow which hung over the tomb. For some time did the fond mother linger near the remains of her child, but she was obliged at last to leave the sacred ground, as she had appointed to meet some friends at her hotel early in the afternoon.

CHAPTER III.



T was well that Madame de Richelet took an early opportunity of visiting the scene of her once happy home, for before the close of the next day she with Rhoda and Adela had fled many miles away from Paris. On the morning after that which found them at the tomb of the little Marie, they went to the Louvre. Madame de Richelet took her young charges there to show them the beautiful pictures, for which the palace was celebrated. The widow herself was anxious to see if one particular portrait still remained. It was a likeness of herself, and had been taken shortly after her marriage. The sisters begged that they might be allowed to look for the picture without the assistance of the original. Their chaperon assented, but she feared they would never recognise it. She sighed when she remembered the circumstances under which she had consented to sit to the artist.

“What was I then?” she asked herself; “and

what am I now? Then a happy wife, and now a childless widow." But she did not murmur, for she had learned to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord."

Long did the delighted girls' eyes wander over the exquisite paintings, but nothing met their admiring gaze that in the least resembled their friend. At length Adela stopped before one picture: the name struck her, for in the catalogue it was called "Louise;" but could the pale, faded face of Madame de Richelet, thought she, have once resembled that lovely girl? Yes, it was possible. She had still the same gentle, dark blue eyes, though somewhat sunken now; her auburn hair, now closely confined beneath the widow's cap, might once, as in the picture, have hung in loose tresses almost to her waist; the beautifully-chiselled mouth was still there, and at times the same happy smile played around it. The painting represented a lovely young woman of about nineteen years of age. She was standing in a balcony of curiously-wrought gilded iron, and was slightly leaning over the balustrade. She seemed to be looking at something in the distance, but what it might be it was difficult to say, as the artist had introduced nothing in the scenery but a forest of trees. Her dress was simple, yet

very elegant, being composed of white satin, trimmed with the richest lace; her train and mantle were of blue velvet, embroidered with silver; the former was thrown so carelessly over her shoulders that it did not conceal the fair neck, and the form of the slight but rounded figure of her faultless person. What few ornaments she wore were composed of pearls.

Adela was not long in ascertaining that this was the picture she was seeking, and she and Rhoda seemed as if they could never be tired of examining it, and numerous were the questions they wished to ask about it.

"Dear madame," said Adela, "the ladies of Marie Antoinette's Court did not wear their hair in that style, how was it that you were not in the fashion?"

"General de Richelet," was the reply, "had the most insurmountable objection to the powder and cushions used then by the ladies of *ton*; therefore, to please him, I adopted a style which was certainly more agreeable to my own taste as well as that of my beloved husband. If you will examine the picture more closely, you will see that the spray of orange blossom in the hair is really an ornament of pearls, fastened on a comb which holds back all the front locks, causing the hair so to fall that the entire face is exposed; thus you see I made

a sort of compromise with the exacting goddess of fashion. We will take possession of this couch, whilst I tell you how and when that portrait was painted."

The ladies having seated themselves, she proceeded, saying : "I had been married just six weeks, when I was called upon to leave my beautiful château, and make my appearance, for the first time, in the *salons* of the palace at Versailles as a bride. I would fain have continued in my retreat a little longer, undisturbed, but my ever-gracious Queen honoured me by requesting that I would, with my husband, attend the State ball given to celebrate the eighteenth anniversary of her marriage-day. Of course a sovereign's wish is a command ; but, after having lived for several weeks in strict privacy, both the General and myself reluctantly joined the brilliant throng.

"Never shall I forget that evening. Her Majesty, only in her element when surrounded by wit, beauty, and fashion, appeared in high spirits ; and the elegance of her person and dress well merited the gaze of admiration which followed her, as, leaning on the arm of her husband, she moved through the *salons*. She was, in my opinion, eclipsed only by the Princess de Lamballe, so celebrated for her beauty and grace.

"I was very soon weary of the exciting scene :

the music seemed to overpower me ; and the glare of innumerable tapers produced a painful feeling over my eyes. I took an opportunity, as I thought unobserved, of slipping away into an ante-room, through which we had passed upon our arrival. There, perceiving my mantle lying on a couch, I threw it over my shoulders and stepped into the balcony, to enjoy for a few minutes the delightful evening air, and gaze upon the moonlit scene below. I was soon thinking of my quiet home, and insensibly raised my eyes and looked in the direction in which I knew our peaceful village lay. Leaning against the railing of the balcony, I had stood in this attitude for a considerable time—perhaps longer than I had any idea of—when I thought I heard some one move, and looking round I perceived the Queen standing upon the marble steps of the ante-room, and holding with one hand the glass door as if to prevent it making the least noise by swinging to and fro. As soon as she saw that she was discovered, she smiled and said—

“‘So Madame de Richelet is already weary of our society. I have been observing your countenance for several minutes, and I can see by it that your heart is in your own château. Your eyes would if they could peer through yonder dark forest to get a glimpse of its turrets.’

"I tried to stammer an apology; but Marie, advancing to my side, laid her hand on my arm, saying, with a sad voice—

" ' Louise, I envy you. Would that after the next few hours I could, like you, retire, with my husband, to some castle, and there, with him and our children, live in delightful retirement! You and most of my friends think me gay and thoughtless, but alas! how often has my heart of late been oppressed with sad forebodings. I have, even whilst smiling on my guests, marked the countenances of many of the nobles; yes, mighty men and powerful, who would scorn to disguise their feelings under the mask of flattery and falsehood; and I read in them discontent and displeasure.

" ' But away with idle fears! ' continued she, as if recollecting herself; ' I am still Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, idolised by my husband, my children, and my—my '—— She paused, then looking at me, said, in a subdued voice, ' and my friends. '

"I could not speak, my emotion was too great. I could only press her hands to my lips, and assure her of my devotion to her.

"Hearing footsteps approaching, the Queen instantly left me. I remained a few minutes in the balcony, reflecting upon her words, then returned to the *salons*.

"The first sound I heard was the silvery laugh of Marie; she was standing near, engaged in a lively conversation with several young noblemen. I looked earnestly at her, but not one trace of anxiety or care remained on that face, now beaming with smiles, and I mentally exclaimed, *You* live in retirement; alas! how little we know ourselves.

"But if she could so easily drown in excitement the voice of warning that would force itself upon her, I could not forget her words to me. I was low-spirited and silent for the rest of the evening, and my husband, fearing I was ill, begged permission for us to retire at a very early hour.

"During our drive home I related to him the scene in the balcony.

"‘The Queen’s fears,’ said he, when I had concluded, ‘are not groundless. Oh, would that she could be roused to a sense of her real position before it be too late! Why, why will she let her suffering people see that she can live only a life of dissipation and pleasure, surrounded by magnificence, whilst her husband’s murmuring subjects are taxed to supply her extravagant wants? Would that she could have told you that she was beloved by her husband, her children, and her *people!*’

"I could not reply, for too well I knew the failings of my sovereign, too well I knew that the

love of admiration was with her an almost overpowering evil, and a taste for all that was beautiful and splendid led her into such a reckless expenditure of the public money, that the position of her friends was often painful to a degree.

“That night I laid my head on my pillow, thankful that it was not my lot to wear a crown. But I was sad, very sad ; I was oppressed with a fear which I could not describe. Was it a presentiment of the approaching fate of those three lovely women whom I had that evening met, and that truly good man whose only fault was culpably yielding too much to the wishes of his beloved consort ?

“Ah, no ! such horrors as Paris witnessed during that terrible year, 1793, were beyond my imagination to conceive. Little did those who, from the battlements of the Tuileries, listened to the shouts of joy which rent the air from the thousands who assembled to welcome the bride of Louis, anticipate that a time would come when, should they be standing on the same spot, they would hear the same sounds of joy because the beautiful head which had before bowed a graceful acknowledgment to the enthusiastic greeting of the populace, had now bowed beneath the instrument of death !

“O Marie, Marie, had you consulted the hap-

piness of your husband's people more, and your own pleasure less, your latter end might have been peace, instead of"—

Madame de Richelet could not finish the sentence, but covering her face with her hands, burst into tears. After a minute or two, she continued—

"The next day was not destined to be spent as quietly as I had anticipated, for scarcely had I finished my morning toilet, when a billet was brought me from her Majesty, stating that she wished to see me without delay. I lost no time in equipping myself, and in less than two hours was in the royal presence.

"Marie was seated in one of the lounging chairs that stood outside the palace on a terrace. She was in earnest conversation with a man whom I soon recognised as one of the most eminent artists of the day; his name was Henri le Moine, a descendant of the celebrated painter, Francis le Moine.

"With one arm resting upon the shoulder of her sister, stood the Princess Elizabeth, and I could see as I approached that Marie frequently appealed to her as a party interested in the conversation.

"'Ah! here is the fair subject herself,' said the Princess, as I knelt to kiss the hand of my Queen.

"I was speedily told that Marie wished my like-

ness to be taken in precisely the same dress and attitude she had seen me in when she had surprised me on the balcony the evening before. Of course the simple wish was complied with, and the result was, that the picture before you was in a few weeks——

“But what has happened?” As Madame de Richelet spoke, she started from the couch, pale and agitated. The sisters had observed her for the last few minutes, even though she was speaking to them about the portrait, narrowly watching a young man who had been standing at a little distance from them; they supposed that she slightly knew him, though wishful herself not to be recognised. At the moment she had expressed a feeling of alarm, he had with a countenance of horror hurried from the gallery with a slip of paper in his hand, which a messenger had just brought him.

“Tell us, dear madame,” said the sisters eagerly, “who is he?”

“He is,” replied she, “a nephew of the unfortunate Duc d’Enghein, who was so cruelly murdered at Vincennes. Something fearful has happened, his face expressed so much alarm. Remain here whilst I go and inquire from that group of ladies yonder.”

Before, however, she could reach the place

where they were standing, they also had in great trepidation left the gallery. She returned, uncertain what to do, or where to go to seek for information. She was not, however, kept long in suspense, for in a few minutes a large picture near them slid from its position, and the Count — through this secret door re-entered the gallery, and in a moment stood before the three ladies, and bowing low to Madame de Richelet, said in a hurried voice—

“Pardon me, madame, but danger is near. Napoleon has left Elba, and is even now on his way to Paris. You have during your short stay in France lived retired, but not unnoticed. It was soon whispered at Court that the widow of the gallant General de Richelet had returned to the city; but to be brief, I saw you enter the gallery, and followed, hoping to have an opportunity of introducing myself, when the alarming intelligence I have just detailed was communicated to me. Without a moment's hesitation I went to the Princess Hortense, who only arrived in Paris yesterday. She begged for one half hour to prepare for her flight, and I have taken the opportunity of telling you to leave this unfortunate place as quickly as possible. I must say farewell, for I travel with the Princess, and she will, I trust, be waiting for me.”

"A thousand thanks for your kindness!" said Madame de Richelet, and she held out her hand to the Count, who with much emotion pressed it to his lips.

"May we meet again," said he, "and in happier times," and without another word he hastened away.

As soon as he was gone, the poor widow, with a face pale as marble, sank upon the couch, and clasping her hands, murmured—

"Father of mercies, guide and help me! Thou hast taken from me him who would have been my earthly protector, but Thou wilt not now forsake me; help my weakness, and give me a courageous heart!"

And He who is ever nigh to those who seek Him heard her prayer, for she arose strengthened, and prepared to adopt whatever plan seemed best for the safety not only of herself, but of the motherless girls under her care. She lost no time in returning to her hotel, and who can describe her thankfulness when she found waiting for her Colonel Elliott's servant, Frank, who had just arrived, having been sent by his master with all speed to Paris?

He quickly informed the ladies that they were without delay to go to Brussels, where Colonel Elliott doubted not he should meet them. Of

course no time was lost in preparation, and soon they with their servants were many miles away from the capital of France, and ere long arrived safely at Brussels. It was, however, two months before the Colonel joined them there, although he had frequent opportunities of holding communication with his family through his faithful servant Frank. Madame de Richelet hired a comfortable house, and the girls, accustomed to a roving life, soon felt quite settled in their new abode. A month passed away, and then Colonel Elliott in his letters spoke hopefully of being able shortly to join his family. The prospect of again seeing their dear father was such happiness to the sisters, that they were in danger of becoming too much excited, and as in the unsettled state of the country, Madame de Richelet knew that the movements of a military man must necessarily be very uncertain, she did all in her power to distract the minds of her charge from the anticipated pleasure. She was well aware how severe would be the disappointment if, instead of meeting their father in Brussels, they received orders from him to return without delay to England, which she did not think at all improbable. In order, therefore, to divert their thoughts a little from that which was day and night occupying them, she sought the society of a few English gentlewomen

who had only made themselves conspicuous in the gay city by holding aloof from the giddy scenes in which their infatuated countrywomen loved to revel. Most graciously were Madame de Richelet's advances met by those who, exiled from their homes, and united by the bonds of Christian love, were never more happy than when in each other's society, and welcomed into their little circle all those who were like-minded with themselves. They soon recognised a sister in Madame de Richelet, who, with Rhoda and Adela, received pressing invitations to join the quiet evening parties which followed each other in quick succession. The girls soon, however, regretted that their usual routine had been interfered with, for, instead of pleasant evenings spent in a variety of interesting employments, they were now compelled to sit with folded hands listening to conversation they were, as a rule, not expected to join in. Madame de Richelet highly appreciated the society of her new friends, so much so, that she failed to notice the expression of weariness which stole over the faces of the sisters, when as it often happened the subject of discussion was one too deep for them to enter into. Not a word of complaint did Rhoda or Adela make to Madame de Richelet, for they saw with what pleasure she looked forward

to meeting her new friends ; but to each other they confided their disappointment.

"Adela," said Rhoda, one night on their return from a very formal party, "if sitting for two hours half asleep is being in society, I will be a recluse all my life. I tell you candidly that I cannot bear it much longer ; were it not that dear, good Madame looks so happy, especially when she is settled for the evening near Mrs. Saunders, I should often be tempted to wish the ladies good evening and make my escape. I think the party to-night was the most formal one we have been to ; I dare not move off my chair lest the lady of the house should think it a breach of etiquette. Her manner was so dignified and distant, and yet she had a very sweet countenance. Madame says she is the widow of a General, and is reserved with strangers ; but when better known is a delightful person to converse with. Do you think I should have been doing wrong if I had played a little with that kitten on the hearthrug ?"

"I do not know," replied Adela with a careworn look, "I am very sorry we are going to another party to-morrow. It would be such a treat to spend a quiet evening by ourselves, or with one or, perhaps, two of the ladies invited to come quite in a friendly way, then I should not

be afraid of entering into conversation ; but I really cannot venture an opinion among so many deeply-read ladies."

"Many of them," added Rhoda, "old enough to be our grandmothers. I wish Madame would be a little more cordial in her manner towards Mrs. Hastwell, who has daughters about our age. Mrs. Hastwell, I am sure, wishes to be intimate with us, but Madame gives her no encouragement. I feel sorry for the poor lady who is quite a stranger here ; and I know Captain Hastwell and papa are very old friends. I have some insight into character (poor Rhoda!) and I am certain Madame is prejudiced without reason against Mrs. Hastwell. I heard Mrs. Hastwell yesterday giving such a charming account of her two daughters, Juliana and Ada, that I quite long to know them."

The lady who had so much excited Rhoda's interest was the wife of the captain of Colonel Elliott's regiment, and on this ground had introduced herself to Madame de Richelet. She was a worldly-minded, designing, and insincere woman. Professing the greatest admiration for the beautiful, amiable, and accomplished, as she was pleased to style them, daughters of her husband's Colonel, she sought every opportunity of ingratiating herself with them. Her efforts were not wholly unsuccessful.

ful—for the young are not generally suspicious—so that Rhoda and Adela were easily deceived by her plausible manner, and were rather pleased than otherwise when thrown into her society.

One morning she called upon our little party to request the pleasure of the sisters' company to take a friendly cup of tea with her. Adela was obliged to decline, as she was suffering from a violent headache. Madame de Richelet wished much that some excuse could be found for Rhoda, but as she really had none, she was obliged to be either absolutely rude, or to allow Rhoda to accept the invitation. In doing this, she knew that she should be acting agreeably to Colonel Elliott's wish, as in reference to Mrs. Hastwell, he had in a letter begged that she might be treated with as much consideration as possible.

"Hastwell, I fear," said he, "has not found in her a helpmeet, but he is a brave soldier, and a good man, and I am sure will appreciate any kindness shown to his wife."

Rhoda spent a very pleasant evening with her new friend, and upon her return home, expressed her satisfaction in glowing terms to her guardian.

"And what do you think, dear Madame?" said she. "A large party are going to-morrow to the ruins of Drusch Castle; it is to be a picnic, and I have promised to go also. Mrs. Hastwell says she

shall be so proud to *chaperon* me, and she will call for me in an open carriage she has hired for the day."

"*You* have promised to join the party?" said the astonished widow.

"Yes, I should enjoy it excessively, and I am sure there can be no harm in my going."

"Rhoda," was the reply, "am I no longer to be consulted as to what is proper or improper for you?"

"Oh yes," said Rhoda carelessly, "when there is any occasion for it; but, as Mrs. Hastwell says, you evidently cannot quite enter into the feelings and wishes of young ladies of my age, and that I am now old enough to exercise a little judgment myself in some matters."

Madame de Richelet could make no reply; she was grieved beyond expression, not for herself, that her own power was weakened, but for the spirited girl before her, into whose youthful bosom, so much poison had within the last few hours been evidently infused.

"We will discuss this subject to-morrow morning," said she, for she saw that Rhoda was not then in a state of mind to brook opposition patiently; and she knew, moreover, that a difficult task was before her, that of eradicating the evil which had so easily taken root.

To her last remark Rhoda gaily replied, "Then you must begin early, for we shall be off by nine," and so saying she pressed a light kiss upon the cheek of her friend, and wished her good night.

Do not think Rhoda heartless, or that she meant to be unkind, in acting thus. She was but young, and though generally thoughtful and sedate, she could enter with all the zest of youth into any pleasure she believed to be innocent, and such she had been persuaded was the excursion planned for the next day.

Mrs. Hastwell was quite right when she told her that there could not be any harm in taking a drive to see the ruins of an ancient and most interesting castle, and that the time so employed would be productive of good in two ways, as to the information and health that might be gained by a ramble of some hours in a country full of historical relics, at such a season of the year. So far the argument being good, Rhoda listened to it with impunity, but how was it that she lent a willing ear to not only insinuations, but remarks, that tended to lessen her confidence in Madame de Richelet? How was it that the unsuspicious girl was so easily led to think that her hitherto-revered guardian exercised an undue control over her; that the ever-anxious friend, the accomplished woman, and the delightful companion, who had --

abundantly supplied all the motherless children had required in the form of intellectual pleasures—she who thought not of weariness, either of body or mind, when their happiness depended upon her exertions—was now incapable of understanding her innocent desires?

The reason why Rhoda so easily fell into the snare laid before her was this—She was a perfect novice in the ways of the gay world, and was consequently more easily led to believe in a profession of disinterested friendship than one who, from experience, knew how often the bland smile and the sympathising tear had each their work to perform in carrying out some secret scheme of worldly aggrandisement. Then, again, Rhoda was not unconscious that she possessed very superior abilities. This she knew from the ease with which she had mastered every difficulty that she met with in her studies ; and she was not insensible to the praises which fell upon her ear from strangers, whenever she was called upon to exercise in their presence her peculiar talents ; and her pride was gratified when she saw that she was considered a person of consequence, and treated with marked deference and respect, which had been the case the entire evening she had passed with her new friends.

Mrs. Hastwell, in the few interviews she had had with Rhoda, partly read her character, and

directed her course accordingly. But, you will probably ask, How could Mrs. Hastwell gain any advantage by the friendship of a girl several years younger than her own children? The worldly-minded woman thought that *much* might be gained. Colonel Elliott, she knew, stood very high in the estimation of his commanding officer, who might be persuaded by Rhoda to use his influence for the promotion of her son, a lieutenant in a regiment then stationed in Brussels.

The weaknesses of Rhoda's character had for some time past not been exposed, but they were still there, slumbering only for want of opportunity to display themselves. Mrs. Hastwell was the person who undertook to rouse them into active life, and she laboured hard on the evening that Miss Elliott was her visitor. The *friendly cup of tea* was partaken of by about a dozen others, chiefly young officers with their sisters. This was the first evening Rhoda had ever spent from home without being accompanied either by her father or Madame de Richelet, and, although she was rather surprised to find that she was not, as she had been led to believe she should be, the only guest, yet, not being naturally diffident, she soon felt at her ease.

We cannot enter into a minute detail of the proceedings of this evening; suffice it to say, that

part of the company were highly gratified, and part were equally dissatisfied.

Well would it have been for Rhoda if she had apprehended danger when she was introduced to Mrs. Hastwell's select circle; well would it have been for her if, before quitting her home that afternoon, unprotected by her judicious friend and guardian, she had solicited the care and guidance of One Who ever watcheth the steps of those who trust in Him. Had she felt less secure, she might have been spared much mortification and sorrow, but she was confident in her own strength, and humiliation and self-reproach were the consequences.

It required very little discernment for her to discover that, from the moment of her entrance into Mrs. Hastwell's drawing-room, she was the centre of attraction. Her hostess contrived, without any apparent effort, that all her accomplishments should be displayed to her friends. Thus courted, admired, and flattered, Rhoda, in a few hours, believed that, after all, the much condemned, gay world must be very agreeable, that she had never before seen such a charming woman as Mrs. Hastwell, and that she herself was a model of perfection. That night she retired to rest with her heart full of worldly thoughts and worldly pursuits, and visions of worldly triumphs haunted her

as she slept. Now she was the queen of beauty at a tournament ; then the May Queen at a rural festival ; next the undoubted belle at a state ball ; and next—but we turn with more pleasure, and yet with something of sadness, to one whom we cannot read of without loving,—Madame de Richelet.

The clock struck the hour of midnight before she sought her pillow. Long after Rhoda had bidden her good-night, she sat meditating upon what steps she should take to recall the blinded girl to a sense of her duty. Oh ! how fervently did she wish that Colonel Elliott would arrive and release her from the heavy responsibility which rested upon her. She prayed that God would open her way that she might see clearly what she should do ; but an hour passed, and the perplexed guardian had not decided upon what course to adopt.

“If,” argued she to herself, “I positively forbid her joining this party to-morrow, open rebellion may be the consequence ; and yet what time is there for quiet reasoning, or for the excited girl to reflect upon the folly of her conduct ? Go, however, she must not ;” and this was the only conclusion the unhappy woman could arrive at.

Wearied at length with anxious thought, she resolved to let the matter remain undecided in h

own mind, and trust to the morrow bringing some relief in one form or another.

Before any of the domestics were astir the next morning, she was anxiously gazing from her window to ascertain the state of the weather, hoping sincerely that the day might prove unfavourable for an excursion ; but though there were many heavy clouds about, the sun was shining brilliantly, and her heart sank within her. Then she went to the room of the sisters, expecting to find Rhoda up, and busy preparing for the anticipated treat, but both she and Adela were still asleep. She would not have hesitated to rouse Rhoda, knowing that an hour's conversation might be of the greatest value, but she could not find it in her heart to disturb Adela, who had been seriously unwell the evening before, suffering from one of those distressing headaches which is with some persons a sure indication of the presence of thunder in the atmosphere, and even now her flushed cheek told that when she awoke the malady would not be gone.

Madame de Richelet went back to her own room ; the air was very oppressive, and, overcome with languor, she lay down again upon the bed from which she had so lately risen. She must, indeed, have been much fatigued, for at twenty
utes to nine she was still sleeping. She was

awoke by Rhoda bending over her to give her usual morning salutation. Starting up, she could hardly at first understand what the happy-looking girl before her meant by being dressed at that hour in an outdoor costume ; but Rhoda reminded her, by saying in a merry tone—

“Any message, dear Madame, to the fairies of Drusch Castle?”

“Rhoda,” was the reply, “do not trifle with me. You really must not think of going.”

“Surely, dear Madame, you are the last person who would wish me to break my promise made to Mrs. Hastwell.”

“I do wish you to do so,” said Madame de Richelet.

“I could not, indeed. I told Mrs. Hastwell that she might certainly depend upon me, that I would never disappoint her, and that all who knew me found that my word once given was never broken. Only think what a fickle creature I should appear to her and to all her friends if I were to tell her, when she calls for me, that I have changed my mind. Of all things, I should not wish to be thought fickle.”

“You need not, my dear, say anything of the kind ; simply tell her that I have forbidden you to join the party ; I will bear all the weight of her anger.”

"But I wish to go," said Rhoda impatiently, "and Mrs. Hastwell quite convinced me last night that I was old enough to exercise my own judgment in such trifling matters."

"This is not a trifling matter, and much trouble may ensue if you persevere in following your own inclination."

"Now, really, Madame, you are too particular, and I feel more and more inclined to Mrs. Hastwell's opinion—that a person who has shut herself out from all society for so many years, however valuable she may be in the domestic circle, is incapable of appreciating the wants of young ladies who desire to see a little of the fashionable world—and what possible harm can there be in spending a day in the country with a party of gentle people?"

"My dear girl! my poor Rhoda!" said Madame de Richelet earnestly; "your visit last night might be considered as your introduction to the gay world. Had I known that Mrs. Hastwell was expecting a party, I should have declined the invitation for you. Tell me, candidly, did you pass through the ordeal scatheless?"

Madame de Richelet had now touched upon a point in the argument, which, had time permitted, would have told upon Rhoda; for though she was for a while self-deceived, she was ever truthful

and honest, and would rather have sacrificed any pleasure than have uttered a falsehood by stating that she believed it to be harmless if she knew it was the contrary. There was, however, no time allowed between the soiree and the picnic for self-examination, and Rhoda remained ignorant of the danger of her situation.

Unfortunately, Madame de Richelet did not give her an opportunity of profiting by the last remark, for she seemed all at once conscious that it was long past her usual hour of rising.

"Have I overslept myself?" she said; "why have you your bonnet on? I understood that Mrs. Hastwell would be here at nine o'clock."

"Which will be in five minutes," said Rhoda, smiling at her friend's look of dismay.

"How is this?" said Madame de Richelet angrily; "why was I not awoke earlier?"

"Forgive me; it was my fault; I desired Mary not to disturb either you or Adela. I was sure your rest in the night must have been broken, or you would not have been sleeping so heavily when I came into your room an hour and a half ago. Are you not well, dear Madame?" continued the really affectionate girl, putting her arm round the neck of the widow; "for I see that you must have lain down again when your toilet was half completed."

"I am quite well, but anxious and unhappy on your account."

"Oh, do not fear for me! I surely can take care of myself for a few hours. Hush! is that the sound of carriage wheels?" and as Rhoda spoke she ran to the window. "Yes, here they are," she exclaimed. "What a happy looking party! Good-bye."

If not perfectly unconscious of the pain she was giving, she was certainly scarcely sensible of it. She hastily left the room. Madame de Richelet sprang to her feet.

"Rhoda! Rhoda! my dear girl," she cried, "stay with me. Do not go, I implore you."

Rhoda paused at the foot of the stairs; there might still have been hope for her. But young Hastwell at that moment appeared on the doorstep.

"Bravo, Miss Elliott!" said he. "You have not, I am delighted to see, shown the white feather."

This decided Rhoda; for several had smiled incredulously the night before, when she had assured them that not even Madame de Richelet had power to alter her determination to be one of the party at Drusch Castle the next day; and more than one had expressed a fear that the morning would find her again a convert to her

guardian's opinion, which evidently was, that she was too young to be trusted alone in society.

Rhoda was already seated in the carriage when Madame de Richelet made one more effort. Seizing a large travelling cloak which hung in her wardrobe, she wrapped it round her, and opening a window she stepped into a balcony, and without appearing to notice the ill-suppressed laughter of an officer who was seated on the box, she called out—

“Mrs. Hastwell! I have forbidden Miss Elliott joining your party. Colonel Elliott will be exceedingly angry when he hears of this. Rhoda, suppose your father should return to”——

But before she could finish the sentence, the young man who held the reins touched the horses with the whip, and, as they started off at full speed, insultingly raised his cap and bowed to the justly-indignant Madame de Richelet, who with swelling bosom and tearful eyes watched the equipage with its giddy freight rapidly disappear from her sight.

CHAPTER IV.



UT for Rhoda all happiness was gone. She had heard the last appeal of her guardian, and was now angry with Mrs. Hastwell for allowing her friend to be treated with such disrespect; and she involuntarily repeated to herself, "Should your father return to"— She had not been able to hear the conclusion of the sentence. Perhaps it was, thought she, "come to-day." She felt alarmed at the idea, then she naturally asked herself, "Why should I be afraid of his arriving whilst I am away?" There was now plenty of time for thought, as the noise occasioned by the clumsily-built vehicle running over the worst of roads precluded any attempt at conversation.

Rhoda's conscience was now at work. So guilty did she feel for having disobeyed Madame de Richelet, so much did she reproach herself for the pain she knew her beloved friend was suffering on her account, and so keenly was she alive to the disrespect which had been paid to that friend,

that she was more than once tempted to beg that the carriage might be stopped and she might be allowed to return on foot to the city. But the demon Pride stepped in to prevent her. "Why should she humble herself before so large a party? On her arrival at home, after the excursion was over, she could, when alone with her guardian, confess her fault, and ask forgiveness. Where would be her boasted courage if, after all, she declared that she dare not brave the displeasure of Madame de Richelet?"

Was not Rhoda deceiving herself? Yes; her boasted courage was very cowardice, for she unwittingly confessed to herself that she feared the gay party of which she was then a member. Again she thought of her father.

"Perhaps, if I turned back now," she said to herself, "I might reach Brussels before he does. But what am I dreaming of? I do not know that he will arrive to-day; and even if I were at home to receive him, I cannot undo what I have done; I should still have to tell him that I have disobeyed him, that I have been selfish and obstinate. Oh! why did I listen to the persuasions of Mrs. Hastwell! If I had but followed the advice of good Madame de Richelet, I should now have been happy and contented!"

When the journey was about half completed, a

slight accident caused a delay of a few minutes. A lady and gentleman on horseback suddenly dashed past the carriage.

“Miss Montague and her *fiancé*!” exclaimed almost all the party in a breath. Some of the ladies stood up and waved their handkerchiefs, whilst the gentlemen raised their caps.

The horses of the carriage, frightened either by the noise or by Miss Montague’s riding habit, which fluttered in the wind a little in advance of them, started to one side, causing such a sudden jerk of the vehicle that one of the officers in the rumble lost his balance, and was precipitated to the ground. Fortunately, beyond a few bruises, he was not hurt, and he joined the rest of the party in laughing heartily at the adventure.

“What if it had been you, Miss Elliott, who had fallen from such an eminence?” said he to Rhoda, as he stood on the carriage step to assure the ladies that he was not seriously injured. “I am certain Colonel Elliott would have had us tried by court-martial.”

“I *have* fallen,” said Rhoda; “and would”
—— Suddenly recollecting herself, she ceased speaking, at the same time blushing deeply. The young man, noticing her confusion, very properly turned to one of the other ladies and made some remark.

"Come, Levison," cried the officer who was driving, "have not the ladies had power yet to heal those few scratches sufficiently so that you may again mount guard?"

"Oh, yes!" said the person addressed, and Captain Levison at once sprang to his seat.

"By the way, Mrs. Hastwell," said one of the ladies, a Mrs. Treversham, "who was that person who was screaming to you at the top of her voice from the balcony of the house Miss Elliott came out of?"

"I—I—really do not know," replied Mrs. Hastwell, growing very red; "I have heard Miss Elliott mention her name, but I scarcely remember it. She is a poor Frenchwoman, dependent, I believe, upon Colonel Elliott's bounty. She is a kind of housekeeper,—or, what is she, Rhoda dear?"

"Are you speaking of Madame de Richelet?" said Rhoda, her eyes flashing with indignant surprise.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Treversham, "I understand she is one of the thousand and one French refugees who first beg at your door, and then give themselves all manner of airs, fancying themselves on an equality with any of us."

"Exactly so," replied Mrs. Hastwell.

Rhoda was perfectly speechless with astonishment. She sat with her large eyes fixed upon Mrs

Hastwell's hypocritical, but nevertheless confused countenance ; and there she sat long after the carriage was again in motion, without once moving those expressive eyes, which, as Mrs. Hastwell afterwards confessed, seemed to pierce into her very soul. Too well did Rhoda remember that only the week before Mrs. Hastwell had called to beg a favour of Madame de Richelet, which was nothing less than to borrow a few pounds.

"I have," said she, "been expecting a remittance from England, but have been disappointed. I have written this morning to my banker in London, but cannot receive an answer for some days."

Too well did Rhoda remember how cheerfully the now forgotten and despised *French refugee* had complied with the request.

"Can that be the same woman," thought Rhoda, as she still kept her eyes fixed upon the embarrassed face of her chaperon, "who only yesterday was begging of Madame de Richelet to enter into the gaieties of the city, using as an argument that it was an absolute sin that society should be deprived of one who was both in mind and person so eminently qualified to adorn it? And this is the *fashionable* world!" thought she. "I have read much of its deceit and hollowness—now I see it ;"

And Rhoda, as if at last wearied with looking at the frightful object, leaned slightly over the side

of the carriage, and appeared lost in the contemplation of the beauties of nature.

It was, indeed, a lovely part of the country through which they were passing, and the scenery well merited the exclamation of delight which burst from the lips of all when the romantic ruins of Drusch Castle appeared in sight. As soon as the party had alighted, Mrs. Hastwell drew Rhoda aside, and asked in a tone of deep solicitude, as though perfectly unconscious of having offended her—

“Are you ill, love? You look so pale.”

“No, I am not ill,” said Rhoda, impatiently; “but I wish I had never come here.”

“Fie! fie! my love; do not be rude.”

“I am not rude, Mrs. Hastwell, but I do not wish for the society of any one who could treat dear, good Madame de Richelet as you have done. Why did you not, when you heard her speaking to you, order Lieutenant Greswane to draw in the rein till she had finished, and you had replied to her? and how could you pretend that you did not know her?”

As Rhoda spoke she grew every moment more excited, and the colour mounted into her cheeks.

“Really, Miss Elliott,” said Mrs. Hastwell, with the most perfect *sang froid*, “you make me smile; you are so simple-minded. In the first place, I

did not wish the world to hear a mere *governess* dictating to me, and calling the propriety of my conduct into question. And, secondly, I felt rather ashamed of this paragon of yours. Did you not see Miss Greswane look at Mrs. Treversham and point to her head, and then look up significantly at Madame's cap, a plain muslin one? Madame de Richelet can never have seen much society, or she would not have shown herself to a fashionable party in that guise. So far from blaming Lieutenant Greswane, I shall take the earliest opportunity of thanking him for relieving me so promptly from a position which could not fail to be, for any refined person, a most unpleasant one."

Rhoda, who was now quite as much prepared to quarrel with all Mrs. Hastwell said and did as she had before been to admire her, stood for some moments quite unable to reply to this speech, which betrayed fully the weakness of the speaker's character. The look of anger with which she had regarded her at the commencement of their conversation was changed to one of contempt mingled with pity. She moved a step or two from her, as though she feared she would be deprived of some of her own self-respect by coming in contact with one whom she felt thoroughly to despise ; for you may easily imagine that, of all characters,

that of Mrs. Hastwell would, when understood, appear in the eyes of a girl like Rhoda one of the most despicable.

Observing that Mrs. Hastwell was waiting for a reply, she felt she must speak. It was with the greatest effort that she could restrain herself from uttering such words as *mean, ungrateful, and heartless*, but, fortunately, some feeling of what was due to a person of Mrs. Hastwell's age checked her; so she was content with merely saying—

“Ashamed of Madame de Richelet! She, who for years graced a court? She, the chosen friend and companion of a queen? *You* ashamed of her!” and Rhoda, always the creature of impulse, stood with flashing eye and curling lip before the astonished lady.

For a minute a cloud of anger passed over Mrs. Hastwell's face; but knowing that it would be folly in the extreme to quarrel with the daughter of Colonel Elliott, and having been well schooled in the art of governing her feelings when schemes of worldly policy required it, she smiled complacently, saying at the same time—

“Child of nature! I could almost feel annoyed with you; but, really, you look so beautiful now that the roses have returned to your cheeks, I am quite enchanted. Forgive me, dear Rhoda, if I am tempted to play a little upon your feelings, in order

that I may watch and admire the varying expression of those speaking eyes and that lovely face."

Rhoda, utterly unable to tolerate such flattery, turned away in disgust, but only to fall into the hands of the mother's counterpart, Mr. Frederick Hastwell. He offered her his arm, reminding her of a promise she had made the night before, that of allowing him to be her faithful knight for the following day.

How glad Rhoda would have been if she could have escaped from the lively party. She longed to be alone, that she might give vent to the feelings of sorrow which oppressed her. It was, however, some time before she could gratify her wish. For an hour or two had she to tolerate the society of her by no means strong-minded companion. Now, leaning on his arm, she was sauntering through and in the neighbourhood of the ruins; then the two might be seen seated on a bank—the young man evidently exerting himself to the utmost to amuse the lady, who was as evidently perfectly insensible to his charms.

Rhoda was, however, unexpectedly relieved from the obsequious attentions of her gallant knight. The hour had arrived when a cold repast was to be partaken of. A white cloth was spread upon a green sward, and when it was covered with game, potted meats, &c., a bugle was sounded

from the battlements of the castle, and immediately the party collected at the place of rendezvous. All seated themselves, picnic fashion, round the cloth. Bottles were uncorked, the wine circulated freely, and the provisions disappeared rapidly, for most of the company were really hungry and fatigued. Their strength was soon recruited, and their spirits now seemed unbounded. Merriment was the order of the day, when suddenly a flash of lightning, followed by a heavy peal of thunder, checked the thoughtless jest and idle laugh. All started to their feet; and, as heavy drops of rain began to fall, there was a general rush to the castle, the turrets of which had, to a certain extent, withstood the ravages of time. After a most inelegant but amusing scramble up a winding staircase, the party, with few exceptions, found themselves in a large circular room, which, if not so far perfect as to be habitable, was sufficiently impervious to the rain to afford a temporary shelter from the storm, which now threatened to be a severe one.

In spite of their fear and disappointment, the ladies could not help laughing at each other, and some were beginning to joke about the unpremeditated race in which they had all joined, when another flash of lightning, fearfully vivid, literally accompanied by crashing thunder, awed all pre-

sent. The ladies were terrified, and anxiously looked round to find some dark recess wherein they could hide themselves. At last Mrs. Trever-sham called out—

“Those who are afraid, come here, I have discovered a place of safety.”

This was a small watch-tower, in which the timid ones took refuge. For a while the storm raged, and not a sound beyond the rolling thunder and falling rain was heard in that room. What were the thoughts of those before gay women, who now, crouching down with their heads bent and their eyes covered with their hands, listened in solemn silence to the voice of the Almighty? Surely in that awful moment their hearts were touched; they must have felt that they were indeed walking at the edge of a precipice, over which they might any moment fall. Surely they must have made some resolutions that, if God spared them now, they would be more sober and watchful for the future.

A brief conversation, which passed during a temporary lull in the elements, will show, alas! that the warning voice of their long-suffering Maker was unheeded, or at least soon forgotten. Perhaps ten minutes or rather more had passed since the last peal of thunder had died away in the distance, when a slight stir was visible among the

inmates of the watch-tower ; then they lifted up their heads and asked each other's opinion, in a subdued tone of voice, as to whether they thought the storm was over or not ; then one ventured to remove the shawl which had been stuffed into a loophole, and another, more venturesome still, actually peeped through the above-mentioned hole. The report she gave of the appearance of the sky was evidently favourable, for soon the watch-tower was deserted, and the ladies were talking as gaily as ever to the gentlemen.

"We will henceforth call that the Black Hole of Calcutta," said Mr. Hastwell, pointing to the place of refuge. "Let me see, how many have been packed in a room so many square inches?" and the speaker forthwith began to count.

"Where is Miss Elliott?" at length said he.

"Who ought to know better than yourself?" was the reply he received from more than one of the party. "She has been all day under your especial care."

The laugh of course was general against the faithless knight, who looked rather crest-fallen.

"Miss Elliott ! Miss Elliott !" rang through the turret, from the top to the bottom, but there was no response.

"Mother," said Miss Hastwell, "do you not feel rather anxious about her?"

"Why, really, Julia," replied Mrs. Hastwell in a languid tone, "Rhoda is quite old enough to take care of herself, and if she were not, I would never undertake to look after any one but myself in a thunder-storm. You know self-preservation is the first law of nature. My nerves feel perfectly shattered."

"And Miss Montague and Captain Digby are missing," said Lieutenant Greswane. "It is fortunate that we agreed upon a signal for collecting our forces. Mount the battlements again, Desart, and sound your bugle."

"That is when I have found it," replied the officer addressed. "It is lying somewhere in the wet grass."

"What a strange girl Miss Elliott is!" said Mrs. Treversham. "I hate your odd kind of people."

"Hush!" whispered two or three, looking slyly at Mr. Hastwell.

"Nay," said he, "do not fear me; Mrs. Treversham's sentiments and mine are much alike. I am ready to resign my charge to any one who will take her off my hands."

"I will take her willingly," said Captain Levison eagerly.

"Thank you, we feel honoured," said a coquetish-looking girl, who was standing near the last speaker. "If the knights of old were as faithless

as they are in the present day, many a fair lady has perhaps waited and watched in vain on the very spot where I am standing."

Captain Levison was placed in an awkward position, for the lady near him had been the one to whom he had for the day promised to devote himself. He of course apologised; the lady, however, would receive no apology, but after bowing stiffly to him, saying at the same time, "You are relieved from all responsibility as far as I am concerned," turned to Mr. Hastwell and endeavoured to hide her chagrin by commencing a bold flirtation with him.

"And so you have not found," said she, addressing her new cavalier in a tone loud enough to be heard by all in the room, "this model of perfection, this peerless beauty, this angelic heiress, this overwhelmingly learned Miss Elliott, so fascinating, so delightful, so everything you had expected?"

"On the contrary," and Mr. Hastwell spoke with evident sincerity. "She is the most disagreeable person I have met with for a long time—sulky, discontented, proud, reserved. I could make nothing of her."

"Frederick," said his mother, interrupting him, "be silent; I entreat you to exercise a little prudence."

"I will not," was the disrespectful answer. "To

please you I sat up half the night reading an account of this castle, from the laying of the first stone to the appearance of the first ghost in the ruins; and I was up at six o'clock this morning learning scraps of poetry upon baronial halls, rocks, waterfalls, and other subjects that might sound well to quote. Believe me, when I pointed out the window at which Lady Something had sat watching, day after day and week after week, in vain for her lover, Baron Brandenburg, till she grew pale and thin, and gradually sank into the grave, Miss Elliott sighed and said, 'What time do you think we shall return to Brussels? I beg your pardon, did you say Lady Brandenburg grew to her seat with watching for her lover? The ladies of those days must have been very weak-minded.' I looked at her, supposing, of course, that she was quizzing me, but she was evidently thinking nothing about either what she had said or what she had heard.

"I thought I would give her one more trial, so began my extracts. I recited to the winds till I was out of breath and then paused—but she never spoke. I began to hope that her silence was expressive of admiration, when she finished me up by asking me, just as I had exhausted my stock, whether it was poetry I had learned at school. I assure you, if it had not been that I was at that

moment much interested in the unpacking of the prog-baskets, which operation was being performed not many yards off, I should have been tempted to—to "——

"Eat her, I suppose," said Captain Levison, laughing heartily.

"I see nothing to laugh at," said Miss Greswane. "What a fickle creature she must be! Last night she was all smiles and graciousness, pleased with everybody and everything."

"Yes," said the last speaker's brother, "from Levison's report of her last night, I was led to expect that I should meet with an angel. I do not know that angels learn manners, but certainly it would be a charity to teach her what they are. When I was introduced to her an hour or two ago, she barely acknowledged my bow, and immediately turned her back upon me; and when I politely, before sitting down to the collation, spread my cloak on the ground, saying that it would save her dress from being spoiled, she pushed it to one side with her foot, and muttered something about preferring the grass to it."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Hastwell, "I can explain the reason of her conduct towards you. She is offended because you treated that woman who was standing in the balcony with such disrespect; and do let me, whilst I think of it, thank you for

showing such consideration for my feelings by giving the horses the rein, without any loss of time. These foreigners do take such unwarrantable liberties."

"For my part," said Captain Levison, "I commend Miss Elliott for showing a little spirit, if she thought her friend had been insulted."

"Really, Captain Levison," said his late lady fair, "Miss Elliott ought to feel greatly indebted to you for defending her so warmly. I think, if I may judge from what little I have seen of her, that she is quite capable of fighting her own battles. The expression of her eye is not particularly mild."

"That it is not," was echoed from every part of the room.

"It is no wonder, though," continued the spiteful girl, who was leaning on Mr. Hastwell's arm, "that Captain Levison approves of the *angelic* Rhoda; you all know that 'birds of a feather flock together,' and I remember hearing mamma say that his mother always called him when young her 'angel boy,' he was such a beauty."

Captain Levison's forehead became crimson, but he made no remark.

"Well, to settle the matter," said Lieutenant Greswane, "we poor mortals have had many pleasant balls, picnics, and promenades entirely

confined to our own circle of beings. We have invited an angel to join us : what say you, are we the better for it? Those who think her any acquisition hold up their right hands ; and those who think she had better hide herself again within the voluminous folds of that cloak which the dowager angel appeared in this morning, and which we may easily suppose belonged to her great-grandmother, hold up their left hands. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven left hands. Don't hurry—one, two right. Humph! some neutral—do not like her, but fear to give offence. Levison, your right hand is up ; sorry that you are not content with your own species. Well, then, ladies and gentlemen, it is agreed by a great majority that our society be entirely confined to mortals, so you may put your hands down. Mrs. Hastwell, you very consistently favour your *protégée* ; may she repay you for the kind interest you are taking in her."

"I do not," remarked Mrs. Hastwell, assuming a charitable look, "think Miss Elliott perfect, but some allowance should be made for her want of experience. She has doubtless been highly educated, but is quite a novice in the ways of fashionable society. Give her a little time before you expel her from our clique. Under my tuition she will, I have great hopes, soon be all we could wish."

"If you have undertaken, Mrs. Hastwell," said Mrs. Treversham, "to make anything, even tolerable, of that girl, who is rudeness itself, I do not envy you. The young madame has been showing her airs to me."

"Anything more to say, ladies, about Miss Elliott?" said Captain Levison, sarcastically. "If so, there is no time to be lost, for the fair subject will soon be here—she is even now crossing what was once, I suppose, a courtyard; and, moreover, the clouds are gathering blackness—the storm will soon burst upon us again. To your stronghold, ye *amazons*!" exclaimed he, as a flash of lightning darted through the room.

"She stands fire well, though," said Lieutenant Greswane, looking through the narrow aperture at Rhoda with the eye of a connoisseur.

And where had *she* been all this time, while her chosen friends were so unceremoniously discussing her? Upon the first appearance of the storm, Rhoda, like the rest of the party, took refuge in the castle, but not in the same portion of it. Fear, she had none—she rather enjoyed the excitement produced by a violent storm; but she sought shelter from the heavy rain. Taking advantage of the confusion to escape from the rest of the company, she bent her steps towards a tower which stood perfectly alone; the walls which

had once intervened between it and the other parts of the castle, having yielded to the influence of decay, had long since disappeared. Entering this tower, Rhoda ascended the stairs and reached an upper chamber.

She was now alone—her wish was gratified; and her first act was to relieve her overburdened heart by a flood of tears. She then sat down, and covering her face with her hands, thought long and deeply, so deeply that she regarded not the storm which raged around her: she was holding communion with her own heart and with her God. The events of the last twenty-four hours appeared to her like a dream. What would she have given if she could have awoke to find that they were only visions of the night!

“But yesterday morning,” thought she, “I was boasting that society would never influence me—that my principles were too firm to be weakened by flattery. What pity, and even contempt, did I feel the other day for that unfortunate girl I heard of, who, before her introduction into the gay world, was almost all a fond, anxious, and most amiable mother could wish, but, by gradually yielding to the pernicious example of new and false friends, she became unprincipled, heartless, and so completely the slave of fashion, that she nearly impoverished her heart-broken parent.

Well do I remember half longing to have an opportunity of proving how I could, if placed in similar circumstances, retain my integrity. My wish has been granted, and I too have fallen ! Well might Mrs. Hastwell say, when we parted last night, that I had quite eclipsed her expectations, and she was sure her *protégée* would be a credit to her. *What* can save me ? *Who* can save me ? ”

And Rhoda—the before proud, self-confident Rhoda—now in the depth of her humiliation, trembled as a poor lamb might be supposed to do, who, having strayed from the fold, feels perfectly unable to defend itself from the weakest enemy. A friend was, however, near—an all-powerful arm was stretched out to save her.

The lightning gleamed, and the thunder rolled, and the tower shook ; but Rhoda scarcely noted the strife of the elements without, so absorbed was she in her own painful meditations. She thought of that dear friend Madame de Richelet, who she felt certain would be at that moment mourning over her withered hopes.

“ Is this the only return I have to make for all her anxious care and watching ? ” said the penitent girl to herself. “ Have all her lessons on piety and submission been wasted upon me ? ” Then Rhoda thought of the sad time that had

elapsed between her mother's death and her introduction to Madame de Richelet. How continually she had deplored the loss of that loving parent ! How she had felt the want of a female friend on whose judgment she could rely in cases that did not come within the range of her father's experience ! and of those many weary hours when her overwrought mind, needing some relaxation, longed for the society of some one who could divert it from its too heavy cares into sources of innocent pleasure !

"All, all my wants," exclaimed the unhappy Rhoda, "have been supplied by her ; and she, my all but mother, my guardian and friend, has been cast off, despised, and insulted ! And papa, too, how will he be grieved ! Oh, how could I be so deluded ! Even whilst I am longing to embrace him, whilst I am counting the hours that have passed since he promised to return— even whilst each of us, night and morning, pray that God will, through all the dangers he is exposed to, preserve him to us. And even whilst my faithless heart is faint by reason of the approaching battle in which he must be engaged, even at this time I have disobeyed him, and wilfully tried to forget his last injunction. Why did I last night, on my return home, beg to be excused, because I was fatigued, from family worship ? Why did I,

for the same reason, hurry over my private devotions ; and instead of lulling myself to sleep, as is my wont, with hymns, why did I fix my thoughts upon the prospect of to-day's triumphs ? And when this morning, I, in the absence of Madame de Richelet, read the prayers to all the household, why did I mock my heavenly Father by taking His holy name in vain, for my heart responded not to the words of my lips ? And last of all, why did I persist in closing my ears to the persuasive arguments of my guardian ? ”

Rhoda then endeavoured to trace to its true source the cause of all this evil. “Pride,” said she at length, “is the bane of my happiness. I felt confident in my own strength, and have yielded to the first blast. Who will help me ? Who will pity me now ? ”

At this moment a crashing sound, as though the very heavens were rent, made the poor humbled girl look up. The room in which she had taken refuge, gloomy and dark even on the brightest day, appeared to her like a dismal dungeon ; involuntarily she repeated the first two lines of one of Adela's hymns, a hymn which they had often sung together before retiring to rest—

“Darkness surrounds us, but we fear no ill ;
Dangers beset us, God is near us still.”

“ ‘ God is near us ’—near *me*. ”

Slowly she sank on her knees, and whilst the tears streamed down her cheeks, she raised her clasped hands and prayed. The beautiful hymn rose to her lips—

“Jesus, refuge of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high.

“Hide me, O my Saviour, hide !
Till the storm of life be past ;
Safe into the haven guide,
Oh, receive my soul at last !”

Her petition was heard ; the lamb was restored to the fold. For some time did Rhoda pray, and she was comforted. When she raised herself up again, a bright ray of sunshine illuminated the apartment. No wonder that she looked upon it as a token that He who maketh the sun to shine, as well as the storm to rage, smiled once more on His reclaimed child.

Rhoda now began to fear that her absence might be noticed by the rest of the party, and, not wishing to appear singular, she resolved to join them. Thinking, however, that the fresh air might obliterate the traces of the tears which would most likely be visible on her cheeks, she, as the rain had ceased, stepped out upon the battlements. A magnificent scene was before her. The

tower on one side seemed almost to lean over the precipice, on the brink of which the ancient fortress had been built. Rhoda felt dizzy as she looked from her lofty position into the gulf below. The mountain torrent, swollen with rain and white with foam, dashed down the rocks, and then lost itself in the numberless small caverns which lay two hundred feet beneath the ground on which the castle stood.

After gazing for awhile on this grand spectacle, Rhoda crossed the battlements. On her right hand, and immediately in front of her, highly-cultivated fields, covered with the richest verdure, lay in beautiful repose, relieved here and there by dark forests of trees and gardens of fruits and flowers. Nature, refreshed by the welcome rain, seemed to have sprung into new life, so bright and luxuriant did all appear. Rhoda, as she looked upon the beautiful landscape, felt her soul rise within her, and instinctively she joined the birds who, perched upon the branches of a tree near the tower, warbled their hymn of gratitude to the Giver of all good. Accidentally she changed her position, and the extensive ruins of the castle met her view. How marked was the contrast! Before she had been contemplating, with admiration and thankfulness, the works of a bountiful Creator—now she looked upon the work of man.

Decay and desolation were spread before her eyes.

"Where," thought she, "are the lords who once held their revels in this their feudal home? Where are the fair ladies who perhaps have gazed, as I am doing, from these battlements? Where is the wealth in which they trusted? Where?—where? Gone and scattered to the winds. And this, the stronghold of once powerful barons, who believed they had built for themselves an everlasting name—that so long as the world continued this once noble castle would serve to remind succeeding generations of their power and greatness. What is it now? A magnificent ruin, dropping bit by bit into the gulf which is yawning to receive it."

Something which evidently rested on the window-sill of a turret, and which glittered in the sun, at this moment caught her eye. Supposing it was the gold-lace of an officer's cap, she was again reminded that her absence might be noted, and remarks made about her exclusiveness. She began to descend the dark winding stairs. After a few steps, however, she paused.

"How shall I comport myself towards those whom I have rudely repulsed?" said she to herself. Here again she felt in fault.

"I am too hasty," thought she, "and uncharitable." Rhoda, now disposed to think that scarcely

any one was so weak and sinful as herself, tried to excuse in others what had previously called forth her indignation. "Perhaps," argued she, "Mr. Greswane did not mean to insult Madame de Richelet; perhaps the horses were spirited, and he was so fully occupied in restraining them that he did not notice that Madame de Richelet was speaking; and perhaps he had been introduced to her, and took off his hat as a matter of course. Mrs. Treversham evidently did not know Madame de Richelet had never even seen her. Why should I be so indignant because she spoke of her disrespectfully? Possibly she has been unfortunate in the French refugees she has met with. All French women are not Madame de Richelets no more than all Englishmen are like dear, good papa. And then Mrs. Hastwell very likely"——

But Rhoda could think of no excuse for this heartless woman. Her eyes sparkled again, her cheeks flushed, as they had done in the early part of the day. She was greatly perplexed, but happily her father's request, that his family would treat Mrs. Hastwell with civility, occurred to her mind.

"Yes," said she, "I will obey papa, I will be civil to her; that is all he requires of me."

Full of good resolutions and charitable feelings, she descended the winding stairs; but what a change had taken place during her brief soliloquy!

The clouds were again gathering, and, just as she emerged from the tower, the storm broke forth afresh. She was not long in reaching the turret in which were confined those who had been so freely giving their opinion of her. She was surprised at finding the room occupied only by a few gentlemen, and blushing began to apologise for intruding upon them, when Captain Levison eagerly stepped forward to prevent her accomplishing a precipitate retreat. Taking her gently by the hand, he led her across the room to the entrance of the watch-tower. The stillness of death reigned within. A heap of crouching figures, with their heads bent down and their faces buried in their hands, was all she could see.

"What does it mean?" whispered her companion.

"They are prisoners of war," was the reply; "and this is the Black Hole of Calcutta."

"When will they be released again?" asked she, entering into what she supposed was some little amateur theatrical performance with which the party were beguiling the time till the weather was such as to permit of their seeking outdoor amusements. "Is a ransom expected?"

"They will be released," said he expressively, "when they can break off the fetters with which they are bound."

Rhoda, still believing that the figures before her were acting a part, was about to ask another question, when the one nearest her moved; one eye was then cautiously uncovered, then was heard a smothered voice, which spake thus—

“O Miss Elliott, is that you? Are you not horribly frightened? I am terrified. How dare you expose yourself to the lightning? Do you not know that your body is a conductor?”

Before Rhoda could answer, another voice, Mrs. Hastwell's, cried out—

“Rhoda dear, is that you? Where have you been, love? how cruel of you to quit my side! I have suffered unheard-of anxiety on your account.”

This was too much for even that perfectly-refined circle, and the shoulders of most of the figures shook in unison.

Rhoda, now seeing the real state of things, turned with Captain Levison to the window, and the two entered into an interesting and lively conversation. Rhoda was by no means displeased to find that her recreant knight had resigned his charge, and that she was to be for the rest of the day under the care of her present companion, Captain Levison, who was not an entire stranger to her, she having met him occasionally in England.

Our heroine and her new knight were naturally pleased with each other. He was just the person

to call forth the admiration of a girl of Rhoda's enthusiastic temperament. Well informed, clever, and amiable, no wonder she found his society so agreeable that she forgot for a time that any unpleasantness awaited her on her return home. How she looked, and how she conducted herself, when, the storm having subsided, the party either in groups stood and chatted, or in couples wandered about, may be gathered from a remark or two made by Mrs. Treversham and Miss Greswane, just before these ladies stepped into the carriage which was to convey them home.

"Well, Miss Greswane," said Mrs. Treversham, "we have at last been honoured with the society of the dark-haired recluse. Tell me what is your candid opinion about her."

"My opinion," said Miss Greswane, looking round to see that no *dangerous* listeners were near, "is that she is one upon whom no dependence can be placed. She and the weather have treated us much alike all day, sunshine and storm succeeding each other most rapidly."

"I quite agree with you," was the reply. "For my part, I shall never pronounce Miss Elliott's name but I shall feel tempted to put the word fickle before it. It is a great pity that some people possess the power of rendering themselves so vastly agreeable at one time and so vastly disagreeable

at another. How brilliant she has been this afternoon! When inclined to be pleasant, she certainly is irresistible. She was quite rude to me all the morning, but about an hour ago, when we were standing alone, she apologised frankly for her behaviour, saying that Madame de Richelet was a dear and most valued friend, and she felt much hurt at the time when she heard such a sweeping condemnation of all French women. She looked so earnest when she spoke, with her large dark eyes full of tears, that I felt quite a choking sensation. I pressed her hand, and was inclined to say something about myself having been uncharitable in my remarks, but I checked myself, thinking that if Miss Elliott repeated my confession, the world would laugh, and say that Mrs. Treversham was growing religious. However, as I stood looking at her, I could not help thinking what a pity it was that that warm, innocent heart would have to be corrupted by the evils which seem inseparable from what is called society."

"Really, Mrs. Treversham, try to hide it as you will, Miss Elliott would make a convert of you very soon; but we cannot afford to lose our gay young bride yet, by allowing her to be persuaded that the world is full of evil, and it is her duty to quarrel with it."

"One thing," said Mrs. Treversham, "that I

admire in Miss Elliott is her sincerity. But, heigho ! when she has fairly become one of us, and I suppose she will be introduced soon, she will have to say that black is white, and white black, if it is the fashion to do so."

In a little while the noisy carriage was in motion, and Rhoda was left to her own reflections. Fainter and fainter grew her heart as she neared Brussels. The ardently wished-for hour had arrived when she would be safe again under the care of her guardian ; and now she longed for delay. Home was reached in due time. The carriage stopped at Colonel Elliott's gate, and the Colonel himself stood before his astonished daughter.

CHAPTER V.



RHODA never afterwards could remember clearly what occurred from the moment she saw her father till she found herself in her own room. She had an indistinct recollection of hearing Colonel Elliott say something to Mrs. Hastwell about her considering that the carriage was hired at Miss Elliott's expense ; of Mrs. Hastwell faintly remonstrating, and him silencing her by some rather severe remark about his orders being usually attended to ; of her father, when they had both entered the house, coldly pointing to the stairs, saying that "he doubted not an hour spent in solitude in her own room would be beneficial." She had been so accustomed, even from her cradle, to obey his every look, that she supposed she mechanically walked up the stairs and into her own apartment.

When she had closed the door, and had heard her father enter the parlour below, and shut that

door also, then a full sense of her distressing situation burst upon her. In an agony of grief she threw herself upon the bed, exclaiming—

“And this is the long looked-for meeting—this the happy day that would witness papa’s arrival!”

Her emotion was so great, that a looker-on would have become alarmed for the consequences.

“Oh! had he,” said she, “but given me one kiss to show that he still loved me, I could have borne it; but that cold, stern look was enough to break my heart.”

A long hour passed away, when she was somewhat relieved by the entrance of her maid. From her she learned that Colonel Elliott had only arrived about half an hour before the carriage containing the picnic party had stopped at the door; that Madame de Richelet took him at once into a room alone,—what transpired within, of course, Mary could not say, but she was in the hall when the two came out; that her master looked much excited, and said, almost angrily, to Madame de Richelet, who was behind him, “Say no more; she must be taught obedience.” “Madame was very pale, and her face was swollen with crying; but no wonder,” continued Mary, “for she and Miss Adela have done little else but watch at the window and cry all day.”

"And how is my poor sister's headache?" asked Rhoda.

"It was very bad," was the reply, "till after the thunderstorm, but it has been better since the air became clearer."

Mary now left her young mistress, who was again alone with a mind in no measure relieved by the information she had gained. She could partially hear what her father, Adela, and Madame de Richelet were doing, as the room they occupied was beneath her own. She could hear her father's measured tread as he impatiently paced the floor. Now and then a little attempt at conversation was made; but after a remark or two, the voices ceased.

At length she heard the notes of Adela's guitar; she imagined that it was at the suggestion of Madame de Richelet that it had been removed from its case. Then Adela began to sing, but after a few words, her voice died away. Then she heard the instrument fall to the ground, and a noise as though her father had flung a chair or small table aside, and hastily crossed the room. Only this Rhoda heard, but she saw all: she knew how they were suffering on her account,—how her father was grieving at her wilful disobedience, how Madame de Richelet was trying to soften his anger,—and how her

affectionate sister's feeling of deep sympathy with her, in her sorrow and disgrace, almost overpowered her; and whilst her heart throbbed quicker, and the tears chased each other down her cheeks, she said, half aloud, a look almost of happiness passing over her face—

"They love me! they love me still! I *will* be worthy of such love," she paused, then added, less confidently, "with God's help."

Her head was now bent forward; she was listening to catch the slightest sound, "Was Adela ill, that she let the guitar fall? Why did papa rush across the room?" said she to herself.

For a quarter of an hour she remained in this attitude; but not another sound was heard. At length the parlour bell rang, and she heard Madame de Richelet say to the servant who answered it that Colonel Elliott would read prayers an hour earlier than usual, as Miss Adela was not very well, and wished to retire for the night. Rhoda knelt down, and, though banished personally from the domestic altar, she joined them most fervently in their devotions.

It was, perhaps, a relief for her to find that Madame de Richelet took Adela straight to her bedroom. There was nothing very strange in this, for one of the sisters often slept with their guardian. Pressing her hand upon her heart, as if by so d

she could still its wild beatings, she heard Madame de Richelet close her door, and then, like lightning, she darted across the landing and down the stairs, and in another minute had flung herself at her father's feet.

"Papa! papa!" she exclaimed, "kiss me, forgive me! let me once more feel your arms around me. Do not break my heart! it will be broken before morning if you do not kiss me!"

Colonel Elliott spoke not, but he lifted her from the ground, and clasped his pale, sorrow-stricken daughter to his breast. For several minutes a silence ensued. Rhoda, as she hid her face in her father's bosom, felt his tears fall upon her head; then she looked up, and her father pressed a fervent kiss upon her cold, colourless lips. No word was necessary, it was the pledge of his forgiveness which she had received. He led her to the sofa, and having sat down by her side, said—

"You have, my child, offended One mightier than I. Can you rest to-night, knowing that His displeasure is hanging over you?"

"I am forgiven," said Rhoda fervently. "O papa! you know not what a wretched day I have spent; but as soon as I was alone, I prayed that God would forgive me and help me. He heard my prayer, and I felt happier afterwards, until

——" here Rhoda's sobs prevented her from proceeding.

"Say no more, my dear Rhoda. I know all. I see that you have truly repented, and you have my full pardon. Go to bed now, and sleep away your fatigue; but first tell Madame de Richelet and Adela what has passed since they went upstairs, they will sleep better afterwards; and try to make your peace with the former, for she must, of course, feel much hurt and offended. This subject shall not be renewed after to-morrow, when I shall wish to hear a full account of all that happened yesterday from the time you left your unhappy guardian standing in the balcony."

Rhoda did as her father wished; Madame de Richelet was only too glad to be reconciled to her before rebellious charge, and to take her again under her protection.

Worn out both in body and mind, Rhoda slept profoundly, and awoke the next morning refreshed, and with the feeling as though a load had been removed from her heart. The ladies met at breakfast with smiles on their countenances, for they were truly rejoiced that Colonel Elliott had arrived, and he seemed no less happy to be once again with his beloved children and their inestimable guardian. After the meal was over, he called upon Rhoda to recount the adventures of

the preceding day; which she did, concluding with the remark that she could now give *her* opinion of fashionable people from experience, "that they were heartless, hypocritical,——"

"Stop, stop, Rhoda!" said her father, interrupting her; "you are as bad as Mrs. Treversham, who so sweepingly condemned all French women. Did you not meet with one amiable person yesterday among so many?"

Rhoda felt that she had been wronging several whom she could both admire and esteem, and she mentioned their names. "Captain Levison, Miss Montague, and her future husband, Captain Digby, were among the exceptions."

"And others, I doubt not, in such a large party; but you must remember that you went under the wing of Mrs. Hastwell, and, consequently, were thrown more especially in the society of her immediate circle, which most probably consists of ladies of her own taste and opinions."

"Do you know Mrs. Treversham, Colonel Elliott?" asked Madame de Richelet.

"I did know a little of her a few years ago," said the Colonel. "The last time I saw her she had just quitted the schoolroom; her governess—who, I believe, was a sensible, religious, and clever woman—having been dismissed the week before. Mrs. Treversham (then Miss Littleton)

was a spirited, frank, generous-minded, and accomplished girl, and gave promise of becoming an honour to her sex. I took an opportunity of congratulating the mother, when we were alone, upon her possessing such a treasure. 'Yes, Clara,' said Mrs. Littleton, 'is indeed a diamond, but at present in the rough. I am now taking her under my tutelage, and I hope soon to see her a polished jewel.' I have never met her since; but you, Rhoda, have been more fortunate. You have, however, by plunging yourself so suddenly into society, decided me as to what course I should adopt with regard to a little matter I have on my mind."

"You must not forget, dear papa," said Rhoda, "that I intend as suddenly to disclaim all connection with what is called 'the world.' I will have nothing more to do with its intrigues, its follies, and its hollowness."

"Quite right, my brave Rhoda; but do you think it impossible to enter into society, and yet avoid the evils of which you speak? Have you not heard of many most excellent and amiable women who have adorned society during their lives, and when they were gone, their loss has been deeply deplored by it? More circumspection, however, is required in the choice of friends when fairly thrown into the world than a girl of

your age and experience can possibly possess. All that you have to do at present is to be guided by those who are placed in authority over you, and on whose superior judgment you may safely rest. Happily for you, you have a friend"—and as he spoke he looked at Madame de Richelet—"in whose discretion you may place the utmost confidence; and it is my wish that you still submit yourself entirely to her guidance. But now for business. The little matter I alluded to is this: Miss Montague, you may be aware, is to be married next week."

"Oh yes!" said Adela, "we know all about it. The happy pair are to occupy the house opposite, which Captain Digby has taken ready furnished for a month, and the bride is to wear"——

"Excuse me interrupting you, Adela," said her father, "but my time is limited; so to the point. Major Montague is most anxious that you, Rhoda, should be his daughter's bridesmaid. I should have decidedly declined had not the Major and I been old friends. I told him I would name his wish to Madame de Richelet, but I feared she would think with me that Rhoda was too young to make her *débüt* at present. However, I find that she has, *sans ceremonie*, introduced herself, so I have no alternative but to comply with the

Major's wish, and any further discussion on the subject will be useless."

"Pray do, papa," said Rhoda, "find some excuse for me. Indeed, I never will enter into society."

"Never will, Rhoda,—not if I desire you to do so?"

Rhoda was silent, she knew argument would be useless.

"We have now no more time to spare for conversation," said Colonel Elliott, rising. "I will go to Major Montague and tell him of my decision, whilst you, my dear Madame, may consult the principal milliner in the city."

Very little worthy of notice occurred during the next month. Miss Montague became Mrs. Digby, and her principal bridesmaid was Rhoda. Having filled such a post of honour, she was necessarily obliged to enter into the marriage festivities, and to perform the duties laid upon her, such as assisting the bride, who was in a few days occupying the house of which Adela had spoken, to receive her visitors and to return the calls of ceremony.

Colonel Elliott had travelled to Brussels with Captain Hastwell, who became the daily guest of the former. Naturally a domestic man, he mourned the loss of all those home comforts

which in his own house were sacrificed for mere outward show. Mrs. Hastwell, however, and her daughters, Colonel Elliott treated with cold politeness. He did nothing that could hurt the feelings of either the husband or the father, but rather led his friend to suppose that the gay ladies could find little pleasure in the society of girls, whose tastes and habits were so quiet as those of his children.

Never again, for a moment, was Rhoda permitted to be alone with Mrs. Hastwell. Every word and look of the latter, when she and the Colonel's daughters were thrown together, were jealously watched by both the anxious father and the no less anxious Madame de Richelet ; and Rhoda was thus spared the trial of having the strength of her principles again put to the test by this dangerous woman.

The Colonel, wishful to devote every spare moment to his children, declined all invitations to spend his evenings away from his family, who did not, however, live very retired, for officers of distinction were frequently their guests ; and the fond father took every opportunity of indulging Adela's love of music, by taking the sisters and Madame de Richelet several times to the public concerts.

Oh, how often afterwards did Rhoda and Adela

think of these last few weeks they passed with their father at Brussels ! Young people seldom trouble themselves about the future, so the happiness of this month was almost without alloy. Little did they dream that such a night of sorrow was at hand.

The time came when the father and daughters were again to part. The last evening that Colonel Elliott spent with his family was one never to be forgotten. The Duchess of Richmond was entertaining a number of guests, and had sent an invitation to the Colonel, requesting him to be present at her ball ; but he pleaded some excuse and remained with his children. As the evening was damp and chilly, our little party did not, as was usual, sit for an hour or two in the balcony, though as their house was in the vicinity of that of the Duchess, they might have been tempted to run the risk of taking cold in order that they might listen to the music to which her grace's guests were dancing.

Colonel Elliott seemed thoughtful, and at times melancholy, till Adela brought out her guitar. After the first song her father seemed to regain his spirits ; he asked for one song after another, he himself selecting them, and Madame de Richelet noticed that he chose all those which were of Adela's own composition. When it came to the

last, he bent his head forward as though he never expected to hear her sweet voice again.

After the sisters had retired to rest, he told Madame de Richelet that it was more than probable that, before night was over, his regiment would be ordered to march to the field of battle ; and he gave her full directions how to act in case he should never return. After conversing with her for an hour, he cheerfully wished her good-night.

It was about half-past one o'clock in the morning that Rhoda and Adela were awoke by the sound of a bugle, and almost at the same instant Madame de Richelet entered the room, and in an agitated voice told them to hasten to their father, who was waiting in the drawing-room to bid them farewell. In great alarm they arose, and each throwing a loose wrapper over her shoulders, did as Madame de Richelet had desired her.

The Colonel did not conceal from his family that his life would soon be in danger ; but he bade them keep up their spirits, for he should, perhaps, return without a scar, and that they must not forget that even on the battle-field he was still under the care of a merciful Providence. The poor girls, however, would not be comforted ; they clung to him and begged of him not to leave them, so that

it was with much difficulty that he at last tore himself away.

That day and the next appeared to the sisters almost endless. At length the Sabbath dawned, but not to them a day of rest. Madame de Richelet had just read a chapter of the Bible aloud, and she and her sorrowing companions were sitting down to the breakfast-table, when they were struck dumb with a roaring noise as of distant thunder. All three turned deadly pale; and well might they tremble, for they knew that at that moment numbers of their fellow-beings had been hurried into eternity, as what they had heard was nothing less than the roaring of cannon, the battle of Waterloo having at that instant commenced.

Who can describe the horrors of that day? The greater part of it our friends sat in the balcony gazing into the street, where nothing but the most fearful sights met their eyes. Hour after hour did they thus remain, hoping every moment to receive some intelligence of Colonel Elliott, but they waited in vain. The servants were sent one after the other to the *Place de Maire* to gain all the information possible, but each in his or her turn came back with the same story, that they had never heard their master's name mentioned.

Night was coming on, but no tidings reached

them concerning Colonel Elliott. Still they sat in the balcony ; a body borne on a litter was set down in front of the house opposite ; the door was opened, and the body was carried in. A piercing shriek welcomed the corpse : the wretched bride had received all that remained of her bridegroom.

So keenly did our party enter into the feelings of poor Mrs. Digby, that Madame de Richelet deemed it advisable that all should quit the balcony. Now in an agony of fear they pressed their faces to the window, in order to discern through the increasing gloom the passing objects. The glorious news of England's victory seemed scarcely to rouse them, for he whom they longed to see came not to receive their congratulations.

At length the hour of midnight sounded from the Cathedral tower, and then Madame de Richelet, without a word, led the almost insensible sisters from the window. She drew down the blind, but she could not shut out the fearful noises in the street, occasioned by the crowds of wounded soldiers who were being conveyed into the city. A lamp having been lit, she opened her Bible, and, though greatly agitated, read aloud some comforting passages to the almost heart-broken girls. Hope was just sinking into despair, when a heavy footstep was heard upon the stairs. With a scream of joy the ladies started to their feet, but

before they could reach the door it was opened, and, alas! not Colonel Elliott, but his servant, Frank, with a face pale and stained with blood, entered the room.

"Papa! where is papa?" exclaimed Rhoda and Adela together.

"I am come, ladies, to take you to him," replied Frank, "for he has sent for you."

"Then he is severely wounded," said Madame de Richelet, with a trembling voice, for she guessed the worst at once; not so much from Frank's sorrowful countenance, as from the fact of the Colonel having sent for his children at such an hour, and into the midst of such scenes, which, if they moved out of the house, they could not avoid. "But, perhaps," continued she, still addressing Frank, "his wound is not mortal;" and as she spoke she intimated by a look that he was to conceal the fact if it were so, for she saw that the sisters were almost speechless with terror.

"Master does not seem so very bad," returned the servant, understanding the sign she had given him. These last words inspired Rhoda and Adela with something of a feeling of hope, which so far revived them that they were enabled to equip themselves for their midnight journey.

Fortunately, Frank had procured a conveyance

for them, and they, accompanied by Madame de Richelet and Mary, were soon seated in it. The driver avoided the main road, leading to Waterloo, and chose a more retired one through the lanes. Thus the party were spared the pain of meeting the mass of wretched creatures who were trying by any means to reach Brussels. Their nerves were, however, quite sufficiently tried, for many many shocking spectacles met their gaze. Not unfrequently their progress was checked by the bodies of the dead and dying stretched on the ground almost under the horses' feet. When such was the case, Frank would, without a word, order the driver to stop, descend from the carriage, and gently move the poor soldiers to the side of the road, grieving that he was obliged to leave such as were alive to their fate.

At length they arrived within about two miles of Waterloo, and then Frank told the ladies that it would be impossible to proceed any further excepting on foot. Accordingly, they quitted the carriage, and were making rapid progress, almost wondering themselves how their senses were preserved in the midst of such horrors, when poor Adela's courage gave way altogether. She was walking half supported by Frank, when her steps were arrested by something catching hold of the skirt of her dress, and looking down, she perceived

a poor soldier lying on the ground almost under her feet. The moon had for a minute or two been obscured by a cloud, but at that moment it emerged from behind its screen, and shone with a light, feeble indeed, but still sufficiently clear to reveal to the terrified girl a deathly pale face, the eyes of which were fixed upon her with a look of agony.

"*Merci, merci !*" cried the dying Frenchman, still tightly holding her dress.

Had a deadly serpent twined itself around her feet, Adela could not have uttered a more piercing scream. She now lost all control over her feelings, which she had before with the utmost difficulty commanded, and she would have fallen on the ground had not Frank prevented her ; he literally tore her dress from the grasp of the wretched man, and taking her into his arms, carried her as though she had been but a child. Shortly after having ascended a hill, the Field of Waterloo was exposed to their view. But I will not dwell longer than necessary upon this terrible journey. One awful idea took possession of the mind of Rhoda. The burning *château* of Hougomont was not far from them, and as Frank seemed to be taking the road which led to it, Rhoda seized hold of his arm with one hand, and pointing to the blazing pile with the other, said in a tone that made the man start—

"Did you leave him in there?"

"No, Miss Elliott, not near there."

"Oh!" and poor Rhoda stood for a few seconds gasping for breath.

Turning down a by-path, they soon reached an old barn, at the entrance of which Frank stopped. In this miserable shelter lay Colonel Elliott. Two soldiers were with him, and were watching his countenance with great anxiety. His face was deadly pale, and it was evident that he was fast sinking, but a smile of thankfulness passed over his features, when he saw his family enter. He had, indeed, received his death-wound, but little was ever known as to how or when. He was last seen on the field about four in the afternoon, but from that time no one could give any account of him till ten o'clock at night, when he was found by Frank and two soldiers in a ditch, his life-blood flowing from his side, and surrounded by the dead and dying. His right hand was grasped tightly by that of poor Captain Hastwell, who was stretched lifeless near him. Frank had some difficulty in loosing the fingers, stiffened by death; having, however, succeeded in doing so, he and his companions conveyed their Colonel to a farm-house near; but that being full, the only shelter they could procure was a dilapidated barn. There they deposited their wounded master; and one of the men lost

no time in fetching a surgeon, who, upon examining the Colonel, found that a ball had entered his side, and to extract it would be impossible. He told Colonel Elliott that it would be out of his power to save his life, or, indeed, to prolong it beyond a few hours. His patient received the information with perfect composure, being well prepared for a hasty summons.

After the surgeon had left him, he called Frank to his side, and told him that he had but one remaining wish on earth, which was to see his children. Frank did not think it at all impossible for them to be brought to him, and volunteered to make the attempt. He received no answer, but a slight pressure of his master's hand was enough to encourage the faithful servant, who at once set out on his errand of mercy.

Knowing that too many horses without owners would be found near the scene of the late conflict, he turned down a lane which led immediately to what has ever since been termed the Field of Waterloo. With a mind bent only upon accomplishing his purpose, he was running at full speed, little regarding any obstacles he met with, when he came in violent contact with a horse and its rider. So sudden was the collision, that Frank was thrown to the ground; the horse reared, but the equestrian, with perfect composure, and with a

soothing voice, almost instantly calmed the terrified animal.

Frank, though violently thrown to the ground, was not sufficiently stunned to prevent him quickly regaining his feet. He was picking up his hat, intending to lose no time by apologies or explanations, when the voice of the rider speaking to his charger struck him as being known to him, and looking up he was confounded to see who it was that he was treating with so little ceremony. Now, with his hat in his hand, he stood in a humble posture at one side of the road to allow Wellington—for it was no other than he—to pass. But any apprehension that he might have offended was quickly laid aside by his commander saying—

“Fear not, my poor soldier; I suspect you have had the worst of the encounter; my faithful——here,” and as he spoke he patted the arched and glossy neck of the animal, “has shown a brave front before more formidable foes than you to-day, and yet you startled him not a little. Who are you?” continued he, drawing in his rein and leaning forward.

“Colonel Elliott’s servant, your Grace.”

“I thought so. Where is your master?”

“Dying, your Grace, in a shed a little way off.”

“Another of my bravest friends gone!” was the only remark Wellington made, and with a

deep sigh the noble Duke rode slowly away. Yes, he who for his deeds that day had rendered his name glorious throughout the world,—he who had that day secured to himself the homage of thousands,—he who would henceforth be called his country's deliverer, and England would be ever proud to claim as one of her sons,—yes, he, the conquering hero of Waterloo, rode through the scene of his triumph with a heavy heart and a bosom laden with grief.

Noble-hearted Wellington! who could on such a night as that of the memorable 18th of June 1815, forget self-fame, all, all, but the loss of a few friends!

For a minute or two after the Duke had left him, Frank stood like one rooted to the spot, and then recollecting himself, lost no time in reaching the Field of Waterloo. He soon selected a horse, and, meeting with no further impediments, arrived in Brussels about midnight. How he succeeded in executing his commission you already know.

Rhoda and Adela threw themselves on the floor near their father; and their cry of agony as they did so rang through the building and quickly changed the smile of welcome on the face of the dying Colonel into an expression of anguish. "My poor children!" burst from his lips. For a minute or two he struggled with violent emotion,

at the same time pleading earnestly for help from above. Speedily was succour granted, and the agonised countenance became calm. Life was ebbing fast, and only very faintly could he make his last wishes known. "Rhoda," he whispered. The poor girl raised herself on her knees, and with tearless eyes gazed upon her father. He motioned her to bend her head down nearer to his lips—she mechanically obeyed. "Take care of Adela," he said in broken accents; "shield her, my darling Rhoda; be a mother to her, and you, trust not in your own strength, but ever lean upon your blessed Saviour. In the hour of sickness, in the hour of mourning, and now in the hour of death, I have found Him a sure anchor for my soul. He will never leave you nor forsake you. Adela, my dove, look up." He laid a hand on the fair head of his sweet child. But Adela heard him not nor felt his touch. "Adela," he repeated, and then, alarmed, Madame de Richelet and Mary lifted the stricken girl from the ground. She was perfectly insensible. "Farewell, farewell, my lovely one," murmured the father as he saw his child carried out of the shed. Leaving Adela in the hands of Mary and Frank, Madame de Richelet re-entered the barn, for she knew that the last moment was at hand. She knelt beside the sufferer, upon whose brow the dew of death had already gathered. He took her

hand saying, "May the blessing of a dying man rest upon you for the care you have taken of my motherless children—be as a mother to them still."

"So long as I live they shall be to me as my own daughters," replied Madame de Richelet, in faltering accents. With a faint pressure of the hand the Colonel expressed his gratitude. A change, which filled his companions with awe, came over his countenance. "I am going, Rhoda, kiss me," were his last words. Rhoda pressed her lips to his, and even whilst she did so his spirit fled.

CHAPTER VI.



THE last rays of the setting sun illuminated the apartment known by the household of the late Colonel Elliott as the young ladies' room, and fell upon the bed on which lay sleeping poor Adela. Bending over her was the faithful Mary, who, with the tenderness of a mother, was removing from the face of the beautiful girl the damp and matted hair which, in its present dishevelled state, was rather an encumbrance than otherwise. Gently, as if each lock of that head was precious, did she lay the wet, half-uncurled ringlets upon the pillow, and then she sat down to watch the sleeper.

Perhaps none but his own children felt the death of Colonel Elliott more than this grateful woman. She thought not, however, of herself ; all her anxiety was for her dear young ladies, particularly Miss Adela, her love for whom was unbounded. Miss Elliott she respected, esteemed, and, doubtless, with a strong affection for, but the younger of the

sisters was her peculiar care. It would have been almost impossible for her not to have had a preference. She had entered her late master's service quite a girl, when Adela was a few months old, to assist the *experienced* nurse in her duties by taking charge in a measure of Miss Elliott, who at once inspired her new guardian with something like a feeling of fear, by stamping her little foot and saying something expressive of indignation when first introduced to her. Mary's eyes filled with tears, but the upper nurse kindly led her to a chair, and then laid on her lap a soft, fair, smiling baby, and the timid little servant girl forgot at once her lofty-minded charge in the lovely creature she held in her arms. Thus did Adela early become a source of comfort and delight to the poor orphan's heart.

As the sisters grew up, Mary seemed to cling more than ever to the younger.

Rhoda carried with her a certain air of dignity when in the presence of her father's servants without exception ; but Adela treated Mary more as a friend than as a dependant. Neither Colonel Elliott nor Madame de Richelet checked Adela's feeling of affection for her *à-devant* nurse, who not only possessed a mind far above her station, but had cultivated it by diligent study ; and her character for truthfulness and strict probity was unimpeachable. Can it be wondered at then, that,

knowing the grief that would, upon awakening, fill that young heart, Mary, on the sad evening that saw the sisters newly made orphans, sympathised to a most painful degree with Adela in her sorrows. She sat and watched her dear young mistress, regardless of her own fatigue, for an hour, fearful of moving a limb, lest she should awaken the sleeper. At last the object of her solicitude began to toss her head to and fro, the perspiration broke out on her forehead, her lips quivered, and, with a start, she opened her eyes.

“O Mary!” she said, “I have had such a dream. I dreamt that papa was—pa w-a-s”—before the sentence was finished the heavy eyes had closed, the expression of the countenance had become calm, and Adela was once more in the land of forgetfulness.

Mary gently wiped the moisture from off her smooth, white brow, and then sat down again. More earnestly than before she watched the slumberer, but the dream had evidently changed; a smile began to play about the mouth of Adela; and Mary heard a word or two indistinctly uttered. Oh! how those few words, “What shall I sing, papa?” thrilled through the listener’s heart.

To poor Rhoda sleep was denied. She sat on sofa in the drawing-room, her face deadly pale her countenance rigid as marble. She had not

yet shed a tear ; Madame de Richelet was using every effort to rouse her, but all in vain, and, becoming seriously alarmed, she had just despatched a servant for a physician, when a slight bustle was heard in the hall, and something heavy was evidently being carried upstairs. Rhoda started to her feet, listened for a moment, and then exclaiming, " Papa is coming home," was rushing to the door, when, suddenly stopping in the middle of the room, she put her hand to her forehead, and, with a loud shriek, fell into the arms of Madame de Richelet.

For the next week the life of Rhoda hung upon a thread, her naturally excitable feelings having been overwrought to such a degree that a brain fever was the consequence. Almost night and day did the devoted guardian watch by her bedside ; and oh ! how harrowing to her feelings was the rambling talk of the delirious girl, whose tongue never lay still. Sometimes she fancied herself in Paris, playing with Madame de Richelet's infant Marie. Then she thought she was in England with her mother. Then at Mrs. Digby's wedding. Occasionally the truth seemed to flash across her mind ; and she would raise herself up and entreat of her guardian to let her see her father. Before it would have been possible to grant her request, had such a thing indeed been advisable, she had

again wandered to scenes perhaps of past happiness and contentment.

It was late on the evening after that on which Colonel Elliott's body had been brought home that Mary entered the room in which Rhoda lay. She whispered something in the ear of Madame de Richelet, who, after a little hesitation, rose from her chair, and, resigning her post to Mary, left the room. She went into the drawing-room, and there saw a lady closely veiled. She was somewhat surprised to find that her visitor was no other than Mrs. Hastwell, who, immediately on Madame de Richelet's entrance, burst into a flood of tears, exclaiming, "Oh, my dear Madame! *you* will pity me—*you* will sympathise with me in my bereavement, for you have known sorrows like mine."

"I do indeed pity you," was the reply, "and am sorry that our own grief is of that absorbing nature that we have little time or thought to bestow upon others."

"Indeed, I regret to have to press my troubles upon you, but the kindness and attention you have shown to me ever since I came to England have encouraged me to hope that I might tell my tale of woe."

A shade of displeasure
over Madame de

Rhoda and Adela,

the Colonel's Daughters.

how short a time it was since her visitor had confessed not even to know her name. She thought, however, to forget this, and to look upon Hastwell only as a companion in affliction.

"You need not, my dear Madame," said "tell me of your loss; I know it already."

Mrs. Hastwell now looked perplexed, and though she could not find words to express what she wished to say. Madame de Richelet began to offer such consolation as she would have expected a Christian friend to give her under similar circumstances; but was interrupted by her listener saying rather hastily, "It is all quite true what you say, I have no doubt; but what I want at present is a—a—to tell you that I could have borne the loss of my husband with heroic fortitude, if he died in the service of his country, but I am not"—here Mrs. Hastwell sobbed convulsively—"left a widow in a strange city almost helpless."

Madame de Richelet now understood the object of her visit, which was evidently for pecuniary reasons, and at once

sufficient to carry you back to England. I will supply what you require thus far."

"Oh, my dear Madame, your kindness is very great; but, though it is almost unbounded, I fear you cannot relieve me from my present embarrassment. I have been arranging my accounts, and find that I owe here and there considerable sums of money in Brussels. You little know what it costs a proud independent spirit like mine to have to confess my poverty to even such a true friend as yourself."

Again a shade of displeasure passed over Madame de Richelet's face, and, with a degree of coldness in her tone and manner she replied, "You will then be reduced to the necessity of selling your jewels. I understand that you have a most valuable set of brilliants."

"They are false," said Mrs. Hastwell, thrown off her guard.

"False!" said Madame de Richelet, in astonishment. "I heard Captain Hastwell tell Colonel Elliott that the diamonds had been in his family for generations."

It was a minute or two before Mrs. Hastwell made any reply; then she said, in a tone almost of desperation, "I changed them for artificial stones, in order that I might raise money to come and see dear Fred."

"Changed them!" exclaimed Madame de Richelet, with a look of horror; "and you told your husband that a distant relation had left you the money."

"I did," sobbed Mrs. Hastwell; "and it is now such a consolation to me to think that I saved my poor dear husband the vexation of knowing that his great-grandmother's jewels are no longer in the family."

"Consoled by the thought that your excellent husband was deceived to the last!" said Madame de Richelet, in a tone of deep commiseration. "I do indeed pity you, for you have an almost insurmountable load on your mind to bear."

"I have," sighed Mrs. Hastwell, not at all comprehending the full force of Madame de Richelet's remark, who, not wishing to prolong an interview that could be productive of neither pleasure nor profit to herself, told her visitor that she should hear from her the next morning; and then begged to be excused, as she was obliged to hurry away, in order that she might return to Miss Elliott.

Mrs. Hastwell immediately rose to leave the room, but, as if recollecting herself, she paused at the door.

"Ah!" said she, "poor Rhoda! how does she bear this stroke?"

"She is at present scarcely conscious of her

loss, her brain being so much excited that we fear her life is in great danger."

"Then you promise," said Mrs. Hastwell, who was in truth so occupied with her own sorrows and perplexities that she had not heard a word about poor Rhoda's illness, "that I shall hear from you to-morrow morning."

"I do promise," said Madame de Richelet, and Mrs. Hastwell made her exit.

The next morning Mrs. Hastwell received a purse containing two hundred pounds, and with it a slip of paper on which was written, "For Mrs. Hastwell, as a small token of respect to the memory of her late most estimable husband; from the family of the late Colonel Elliott, whose blood was mingled with that of his friend, Captain Hastwell, on the field of battle."

Three weeks passed slowly away. Colonel Elliott had been laid in the grave; Rhoda had risen from her bed of sickness a mere shadow of her former self; the never-to-be-forgotten month of June for that year had glided into the unfathomable gulf of time, a mere speck indeed in the ocean of eternity, but a month that seemed afterwards to the minds of the orphan sisters as if it had comprised within its space sufficient happiness and misery for an entire life. The comfort and pleasure it afforded them to feel at the beginning of

the month that their beloved father, safe and well, was with them once more after a long and protracted absence (and after having escaped many threatened dangers) was very great. And not only had the month found them (at its commencement) enjoying the society of their almost adored parent in more than an ordinary degree on account of their late separation, but the sisters were entering under his protection into pleasures of which before they had only read, and of which they partook with all the zest of youth. How short-lived was their connection with what is called the world !

It was in the middle of July that Rhoda, supported by Madame de Richelet and Mary, made her first appearance in the drawing-room after her alarming illness. The sofa was drawn close to the open window, for the weather was very oppressive, and Adela was busy arranging the cushions for the invalid. The faces of all the party were pale, and their countenances sad, but calm ; their grief had settled down into a quiet subdued sorrow, for each could say that she was resigned to the will of God.

After Rhoda had been placed upon the sofa she lay for a while perfectly silent, being, in fact, too exhausted to speak ; the fresh air, however, revived her considerably, and she begged earnestly of her

guardian to answer a few questions she wished to ask. Mary had left the room, and Adela was busy turning over the pages of some music.

"Now do, dear Madame," said Rhoda, putting her hand into that of her guardian, who was seated by her side, "grant my request; let me talk a little about the past. Indeed, it will be a great relief to my mind to know what has occurred during my illness."

Madame was at first at a loss to know what to do. The physician who was attending Rhoda had positively forbidden that his patient should be allowed to ask any questions relating to the battle of Waterloo, or even to have any allusion made to it in her presence. After a few seconds' thought, Rhoda's guardian judged rightly that, as the poor girl's wish was great to hear the fate of some of her friends, and a few particulars relating to her father, a little conversation on the subject would tend rather to compose her mind than otherwise.

"Very well, my dear," said she at last; "but you must not excite yourself, or Dr. Distin will blame me much for what he will consider great imprudence on my part."

"Then tell me, where poor papa is buried." Madame de Richelet satisfied her on this point. The Colonel was interred in a beautiful cemetery

just beyond the city. Rhoda next proceeded to ask whether any further information had been gathered as to how or when he had received his death wound?

"We know nothing beyond"—and Madame de Richelet related to her what you already know about Frank searching for his master and finding him in the ditch with Captain Hastwell. After a short pause, Rhoda said—

"And what has become of poor Mrs. Digby? I see her house is closed."

"As soon as her husband was laid in the grave, she returned to her father's house, and, I believe, she and all the Montagues are now in England. General Montague escaped unhurt."

"Ah!" sighed Rhoda, "then, Mrs. Digby is not so much to be pitied as we are, for she is still with her father."

"She is not, indeed," said Adela. "I could be happy almost under any circumstances, just now, if dear papa were with us;" and as she said this, she laid her head on the table and gave way to an unrestrained fit of crying.

Madame de Richelet did not attempt to discuss the nature of Mrs. Digby's loss with the sisters. She was aware that their young, inexperienced minds were incapable of entering into the feelings of the poor widow; but she herself knew how

crushed and lonely that widowed heart would feel even in the home of her parents.

"And where are the Hastwells?" was Rhoda's next question.

"I do not know; but I am told that they have left Brussels." Madame de Richelet then gave Rhoda an account of Mrs. Hastwell's visit. She concluded by saying, "I have not seen her since, but she wrote a note, thanking me for my kindness, and hoped I would excuse her calling before she left Brussels, as her departure from the city would be a very hurried one. Who else do you wish to hear about?"

"Captain Greswaine."

"He, at this moment, lies in a hopeless condition, if, indeed, he be not dead, which is more than probable. His leg was so shattered by a cannon ball that amputation was found necessary; but he was so impatient, and showed so much fear at the idea of the operation, that too much time was lost before the limb was removed; mortification has taken place, and death must of necessity follow."

After a few minutes' silence, Rhoda—a slight blush mounting to her cheeks—inquired how Captain Levison had fared in the late conflict.

"He was slightly wounded," was the answer, "but is now, I fancy, well. I don't know his

reason for still remaining in Brussels, as his regiment has returned home."

An expression of pleasure for a moment rested on Rhoda's face, but it soon passed away and left her pale and languid. She closed her eyes and was silent. Madame, in order to prevent any further conversation with the invalid, moved to that part of the room where Adela was sitting, and saw that the tears of the affectionate girl were falling upon a piece of music she held in her hand.

"Why are you," whispered Madame, "unnecessarily taxing your feelings by turning over these songs?"

"This is the last I sang to papa," sobbed Adela. "I shall pack up all my music; you will never hear me sing again."

"Say not so, dear Adela. I hope again often to hear your sweet voice."

"I do not think you ever will," was the reply, in broken accents.

Madame gently took the music into her own care, and closing the portfolio said, "You will come with me into the garden now. I think Rhoda is inclined to sleep. Mary will sit here until we return."

From that day Rhoda recovered her strength, but her nerves had received a great shock, and it

would be long evidently before they attained their once vigorous tone. Her spirits were most uncertain, now fearfully depressed, then unnaturally high. Madame de Richelet felt most anxious about her. The physician urged entire change of scene, but the sisters pleaded earnestly not to be removed from a spot so dear to them. Most of the English families had returned to their respective homes. They had no home but their present foreign one, and why, they argued, should they be deprived of the only earthly consolation they had, that of being able to visit daily their father's grave. The kind-hearted Dr Distin felt deep interest in the orphans. He feared more for Adela than for Rhoda. His eye frequently rested upon the former, so careworn, fair, and fragile, and he knew that there was more reason to fear for her than for her naturally robust sister. He was right. Adela still yielded to excessive grief, and both persuasion and art failed to rouse her from the sorrow which at length threatened to seriously affect her health. The languid step, the hectic flush, and the often laboured breath, warned Madame de Richelet that she must hasten her preparations for departure.

Apart from consideration of the health of her charges, she had another reason for wishing to quit Brussels with as little delay as possible. Captain

Levison still remained in the city—a truly valuable friend he had proved himself to the sorely tried widow, who felt daily increasing admiration and esteem for the young officer. Her mind, wholly occupied with pressing cares and business, and, we must add, her own grief for the loss of him whom she regarded, not only as a friend and benefactor, but a protector in her lonely widowhood; the possibility of Captain Levison regarding either of the sisters with more than brotherly interest never occurred to her. She was, perhaps, less on her guard because a barrier she believed insurmountable precluded all idea of his ever being aught to them but a friend. He was a Romanist. Thus, without any suspicion of harm arising, she made him at all times welcome to her house, and gratefully accepted his services when the aid of a gentleman was necessary. It was Dr Distin who opened her eyes to the fact that Brussels would possess but little attraction for Captain Levison after Miss Elliott had taken her departure, and that the unevenness in the spirits of the latter he did not attribute entirely to bodily weakness. Her suspicions once roused, Madame de Richelet narrowly observed Captain Levison on his next visit, which was a very prolonged one, and she marvelled that she had been before blind to the fact that an attachment stronger than mere friend-

ship for Rhoda guided his every word, look, and action.

Not till now had poor Madame fully realised the heavy responsibility that had been laid upon her, for she had also too much reason to fear that Rhoda, though unconscious of it herself, was far from indifferent to the delicate attentions of her admirer. Once fully alive to danger, Madame acted promptly, listening to no argument in favour of a longer residence in Brussels. Without even consulting the sisters she resolved not to take them to England, but to furnish a château on her own property in France. Her plans were speedily put into execution, and almost unfeelingly Rhoda and Adela thought they were hurried from Brussels. It was a sad journey ; for the first several stages the sisters refusing to be comforted. Gradually, however, they became interested in the scenes they were passing through. Each hour found them more cheerful, and ere they reached their destination they were prepared to be at least contented with their new home, which was situated in a lovely part of the country. The Château Cleremont was surrounded by beautiful gardens, at the sight of which Adela's passion for flowers, which for long had been compelled to lie dormant, seemed to spring into new life, and the first evening of her arrival found her holding animated consultations

with the gardener. Madame de Richelet watched her slight figure as it flitted to and fro from plot to plot, and the expression of anxiety the widow's wan face had so long worn was changed to one of relief and even of pleasure. She knew that for Adela she need now have no fear on the score of health. "Would that Rhoda had the same taste for flowers as her sister," said the fond guardian half aloud. "Where has she hidden herself? I have not seen her for the last hour, and I know she is not in her own room nor is she in the garden."

Madame at once began to search for the missing one. After seeking in vain for her in every part of the château she ascended a narrow winding stair which led to the terraced roof. There she found Rhoda gazing with a countenance difficult to read upon a scene calculated, it might be supposed, to excite emotions of pleasure and admiration alone. The prospect from the terrace was an extensive one, embracing rich pasture land in which sheep and cattle were grazing, fields of waving corn, woods beautiful with their autumnal tints, and châteaux with their pretty terraces, their plantations, and their exquisite gardens. Beyond this scene, perfect in its repose and beauty, rose high and rugged hills, their summits tinged with the rays of the setting sun. Above the sea of gold which surrounded the glorious orb, fleecy clouds edged with purple and

amber completed the picture. Gradually the great ball of fire sank behind the hills, the gorgeous hues faded away, and the pure white clouds were changed to sombre grey, and the outlines of the rugged hills became dark and drear.

With a hopeful heart and animated countenance Madame de Richelet had stepped lightly upon the lofty terrace. She observed Rhoda, but was as though she had not done so, for she was at once fascinated with the lovely scene spread out before her. She was in time to see the sun disappear with all his attendant glory, and in silence she watched the snowy clouds with their purple and gold borders changed to ashen grey, and the shades of evening steal over the landscape.

Feelings of intense thankfulness to, and admiration for, the bountiful Creator Who had directed her to such a lovely home, were mingled in her breast, and so with a heart swelling with gratitude she turned to Rhoda, doubting not that she should meet with sympathy in her present happiness from the evidently equally entranced girl. But who can express her disappointment when she beheld her companion in an attitude of the deepest melancholy, gazing almost vacantly upon the distant hills. Losing for a moment her self-possession, poor Madame leaned against the parapet and pressed her hand upon her forehead. The revulsion of

feeling was too much for her, worn out as she really was, both mentally and physically, she felt faint and giddy, but was resolved not yet to yield to weakness. She staggered to the spot where Rhoda stood, and laid her hand heavily on the shoulder of the latter. Rhoda started and exclaimed, "It seemed to me like Paradise, and that I was looking upon the gate of Heaven. Oh, when shall I be there, and again with my dear, dear parents!" and the excited girl covered her face with her hands and sobbed aloud.

"Rhoda," said Madame, almost reproachfully, "would you leave Adela, and have you no thought for me; am I never to know what rest is again?"

Madame had touched upon the right chord. Rhoda hastily raised her head and gazed long and earnestly on the face of her friend and guardian, and as she did so she read in that pale wan face, with its sunken cheeks and heavy eyes, a tale of self-denial, long-suffering, devotion, and, alas, of weakness, bordering on utter prostration. In a moment Rhoda's whole bearing was changed.

"Forgive, forgive me!" she exclaimed. "I have been selfish, unkind, cruel; no, no, I would not leave you."

Madame de Richelet, deadly pale, would have fallen had not Rhoda prevented her. "Adela,

Mary, come, come," cried the alarmed girl, "dear Madame is fainting."

Her cries soon brought assistance, and the almost unconscious widow was borne to her own room. With the devotion of loving daughters the sisters nursed their revered guardian, and were, indeed, truly thankful to learn from the physician they called in that she was suffering only from exhaustion arising from an over-taxed mind. "Rest and cheerful society are all she needs," he said.

"And she shall have both," was the decided reply from the sisters simultaneously. And so Madame, now regarded as the invalid, was tended as a precious charge entrusted to the orphans. The sorrows of the past were never named in her presence, favourite studies were commenced anew, and Adela so far mastered her feelings that her sweet voice was again heard singing the songs Madame so earnestly longed to hear, and soon the daily routine of the house was set in motion. The owners of the neighbouring châteaux in due time showed every disposition to be on sociable terms with the interesting trio. Madame entered into their hospitable spirit, and visits, necessarily strictly quiet ones till the days of mourning were over, were exchanged. There were several young people among these new friends, and with them Adela was

soon an especial favourite. Gentle, confiding, unsuspicious, affectionate, yielding, and sweet-tempered, she quickly won the hearts of her new companions ; whilst Rhoda, reserved and dignified with strangers and grave and studious beyond her years, was little calculated to make a favourable impression upon naturally light-hearted and pleasure-loving French girls. She was conscious of this, but it troubled her not, and she willingly resigned the palm of popularity to her more fascinating sister. She only retired a little more within herself, and often preferred remaining at home to accompanying Madame and Adela on visits of ceremony or of pleasure.

Madame de Richelet was not at ease as regarded Rhoda, for though the latter always after the scene on the terrace wore an air of composure and often of cheerfulness in the presence of her guardian, the former knew that it was too frequently an effort for her to do so. Perhaps she was more suspicious in consequence of the remark of Dr. Distin in reference to the unevenness of Rhoda's spirits before they left Brussels, and Madame felt sure that she was not entirely in Rhoda's confidence. She refrained, however, from questioning her, but trusted to circumstances revealing her secret sorrow if any really existed. But if Rhoda failed in exciting a warm interest among her new

acquaintances in her own circle, the poor of the neighbourhood fully appreciated her. The hamlet in which the peasants chiefly lived lay about two miles distant from the château of Madame de Richelet, who was still too weak to take any very active part in schemes of benevolence, though her purse was ever open to relieve cases of distress. Adela involuntarily shrank from scenes of sickness and poverty ; but Rhoda, with an energy that surprised her sister and her guardian, devoted herself not only to the temporal but to the spiritual welfare of the peasants, and soon no sight was more welcome in the village than that of Miss Elliott in her little pony carriage, and no sound so sweet as that of the bells of her pretty ponies. With a liberal hand she relieved the poor, and with a sympathising heart comforted the afflicted ; and many a blessing was showered on the head of the good young English lady, and many a prayer went up from peasant's cot that she might be spared to them through the coming winter, when, as they knew from past experience, the outdoor labourers' work would be scarce and provisions high.

The autumn passed rapidly away, and when the days became short and the nights long and cold, Madame de Richelet was frequently pressed to allow Adela to spend a night at this château or a day or two at that, on the plea that the lanes after

nightfall were dark and dangerous, and that Adela was such an acquisition wherever she went her society now seemed almost indispensable.

Feeling assured that no evil could arise from these visits, and thankful that so many sources of innocent amusement had sprung up, and which had brought back the hue of health, the sweet smile, and the light step to her loved one, Madame seldom withheld her consent. Oh, how bitterly she repented afterwards that she had ever permitted her gentle dove to leave her sheltering wing for a single day !

The memorable year of 1815 was fast drawing to a close, when one cold, bleak, dreary morning, the post brought a letter addressed to Madame de Richelet from Captain Levison. It excited no surprise on the part of Madame. She had been rather astonished than otherwise that she had not before heard from her young friend. Still she felt nervous, and her hand trembled as she broke the seal. Her fears were not groundless. In a few impassioned words the writer declared his unalterable affection for Miss Elliott, that he had striven to forget her, fearing that the difference in their religion might in her eyes be an insurmountable obstacle to her ever listening to his addresses. But all in vain, he could not forget her, and he entreated of Madame to allow him to visit her.

"Oh, I might have been spared this," murmured poor Madame. "So excellent, brave, and true! But for his Christ-dishonouring creed how I would have welcomed him as a suitor for the hand of my Rhoda, but it cannot be," and, crushing the letter in her hand, she paced the room as though nerving herself for the painful task before her. Then arose the question in her mind. "Shall I write to him and not let Rhoda know of this, or shall the refusal go direct from her?"

Fain would the loving guardian have spared the dear girl the trial of dashing his hopes to the ground, for trial she felt it would be. The possibility of Rhoda sacrificing principle to feeling never occurred to her. She decided at length that it would be better to let Rhoda see the letter. She rang the bell, and Mary answered it. "Tell Miss Elliott to come immediately to me," she said hurriedly. Mary looked frightened as her eye glanced from the pale face of her mistress to the crushed letter. "Stay, no," said Madame; "I will go to Miss Elliott."

She found Rhoda in the drawing-room. It was a busy season for the young Dorcas, who was, when Madame entered the room, just completing a list of articles in the way of warm clothing she intended to distribute among her peasant friends on New Year's Day.

"Read my list, dear Madame," she said, without raising her eyes. "Flannel and linsey petticoats, warm worsted stockings, cloth jackets. Read it and tell me if I have forgotten anything. They will be so warm and comfortable." The energetic Rhoda now for the first time looked at her listener. She started, exclaiming, "You are ill, dear Madame. You have received a letter. Has anything happened to Adela?"

"No, no," gasped Madame, "Adela is well, or at least was yesterday. I am glad she is not at home just now. Compose yourself, dear Rhoda, nothing terrible has happened, only what I suppose must happen now and then where there are young ladies," and poor Madame smiled faintly. "Read this," she continued, handing the letter to the now bewildered Rhoda, who mechanically took it, slowly opened it, and read every word. For a minute or more her eyes rested upon the signature. Then she folded up the letter, carefully smoothing out the creases as she did so, and placed it in her desk. She was very pale, and her lips were compressed.

"What reply am I to give, dear child?" asked Madame, in an almost supplicating tone.

"I will tell you in time for the next post. I wish to be alone."

"You shall have my prayers," said Madame

with emotion ; and after imprinting a kiss on Rhoda's cold cheek, she withdrew to her own room.

An hour later Rhoda tapped impatiently at her door, and without waiting for permission entered the apartment. Madame was on her knees. Rhoda waited until she had risen ; the poor girl was very pale, and her lips quivered, but her eyes were expressive of conquest and decision. Madame looked inquiringly at her, who at once satisfied her.

"Tell him," were her only words, "not to come, that I cannot and will not see him ; and tell him not to write again, but to forget me as I intend to forget him."

She waited not for any reply, but instantly left the room ; and Madame heard her hurry across the landing, enter her bedroom, shut the door with no gentle force, and turn the key.

"My brave Rhoda," said the relieved guardian, "has had a hard battle with self, and though she has conquered she fears to prolong the conflict."

It now only remained for Madame to write to Captain Levison. She did so with a sorrowful yet thankful heart, delivering Rhoda's message word for word. Willingly would she have softened the curt reply, and for a moment she regretted that she had not asked permission from Rhoda to tell

him the reason of her refusal. Then she felt that Rhoda had well considered every word of her message. It was decided, and left no ground for hope, though it implied that she was not quite indifferent to him. Was that wise? argued the perplexed guardian within herself. Yes, Rhoda may have involuntarily given him encouragement when in Brussels, though not a word on the delicate subject had passed between them, and now Rhoda would not have him deem her a coquette. So Madame at last concluded that it would be better simply to deliver Rhoda's message, only adding that if Miss Elliott had wavered, she herself could never, on account of his religion, consent to his visiting them in any other character than that of a friend. And thus she wrote, assuring him at the same time of her sincere sympathy, and her continued esteem and friendship. Having folded up and sealed the brief letter she entrusted it to Mary, with strict injunctions to take it to the post-office without delay.

Her task done she sank wearily on the sofa, and tears she could not restrain rolled down her cheeks. She felt keenly for Captain Levison. Oh, how I could have welcomed him, she thought, had he been of our faith; but as it is, I must shut my doors against him, with the debt of gratitude I owe him for his all but filial care of me in Brussels unp

As though I were his mother I can weep for him, but I must not tell him so, and he will never know what it has cost me to crush his fond hopes, and he will have no one to comfort him, for to me alone as the guardian of his chosen one will he have confided the secret of his love.

The next morning Rhoda met Madame as though nothing particular had happened, but she was very pale; she kissed her guardian affectionately, and then said in a low voice,

“Did you write to Captain Levison as I wished you to do yesterday?”

“I did,” was the concise answer; and from that hour the name of her first suitor never passed Rhoda’s lips.

A few weeks afterwards Madame saw her face suddenly flush as she was reading the newspaper, and Madame, when Rhoda had left the room, took up the paper and observed that Captain Levison was gazetted Major, and that his regiment was ordered abroad.

Madame de Richelet noticed a decided change for the better in Rhoda, her spirits became uniformly good, and she was consequently cheerful without any effort to appear so. All reserve had disappeared, her conversation became perfectly unrestrained, and she began to speak hopefully of future plans and pleasures. She no longer

shunned the society of her equals, though showing no disposition to form any new intimate friendships. No place and no person had charms for her equal to her own peaceful home and its beloved inmates. Adela, on the contrary, evidently enjoyed variety, and both her guardian and her sister often felt a little chagrined that she seemed so willing to escape from the monotonous—as she was evidently beginning to find it—routine of home life. Not that the sweet girl ever displayed the slightest discontent, but an invitation to spend a day or longer with a friend, always brought a bright smile to her face, and her expressive eyes pleaded Madame's consent to her accepting it.

The winter passed away and the country again was seen in all its beauty, even more lovely in the spring than when Madame and Rhoda gazed upon it for the first time from the terraced roof. All was sunshine in the château ; the sisters were in perfect health, and could now speak with composure of their father in his foreign grave. Madame had met with more than one congenial spirit in her new circle, and there seemed nothing wanting to complete her happiness. How shortlived was the lull in the troubled sea of life she seemed destined to battle with to the end !

It was on the afternoon of the first of May, that Adela and a friend, Mdlle. Pascal, with whom the

former had been spending a few days, suddenly stood before Madame de Richelet, who was seated reading in the verandah of her château. Adela's countenance was full of animation and pleasure.

"Well, my sweet May Queen, what request now?" said Madame fondly, and she lifted up her face to receive a kiss from the lovely girl.

"Oh, such a treat in store for me!" was the reply, "if you will only consent, dear Madame. Madame Pascal and Marie are in a week setting off on a tour through Switzerland, and they wish me to go with them. Do, dear Madame, say I may go. Marie will take your answer to her mamma," and Adela coaxingly threw her arm round the neck of her guardian, who after a few second thoughts said,

"Nay, darling, I cannot at once give a reply to such an invitation. I must see Madame Pascal and hear what her arrangements are; I must also consult with your sister. I will drive over to Château Blanc to-morrow, and will learn all particulars from Madame Pascal."

"Thanks, thanks, dear Madame," said Marie. "I am sure mamma will persuade you to let Adela go with us, and you must let Adela return with me in the carriage, and stay one more night with us, for we have so much to say to each other about the journey."

"No, no, Mdlle. Pascal," was the reply. "With the prospect of shortly losing Adela for a month, we cannot spare her now for a single hour." And so Marie went home, and Adela sought her sister to tell her of her anticipated tour.

Marie Pascal was right ; her mother could easily persuade Madame de Richelet to accede to her wishes, for the latter had the highest opinion of the former, and a warm friendship already existed between the two widows. There was a bond of sympathy which drew them to each other had their tastes and habits been less similar than they were. The husband of Madame Pascal had fallen in the Revolution, but not a desolate widow like Madame de Richelet had she been left, for seven children shared her sorrow and claimed her love.

Madame de Richelet, according to her promise, drove over to Château Blanc, and the result was that the anxious guardian could really raise no objection to Adela joining the travelling party, which was to consist of Madame Pascal, her eldest son and his bride, her daughter Marie, and two nephews, youths who, half-wild with delight, talked largely about climbing precipices, fording swollen torrents, rolling down steep glaciers, and other unheard-of feats of daring and prowess.

It was a busy week that which preceded Adela's departure. Madame had no misgiving as regarded

the dear girl's safety, still she could not shake off a feeling of depression she scarce knew how to account for; and when the hour of parting came she embraced her loved one over and over again, and, as she consigned her to the care of Madame Pascal, said, "Remember, I shall expect you to return her to me in a month from this day."

Rhoda was little less affected when she bade her sister farewell; her last words to her were, "Do not forget, Adela, that we must spend the eighteenth of next month together."

The tears started at once to Adela's eyes, and the colour fled from her face, as she replied, "I would not wish to be near any one but you and dear Madame on that day."

A few minutes later Madame Pascal's carriage, with its joyous occupants, rolled away, and Madame de Richelet and Rhoda silently and sadly re-entered the house.

The transmission of letters in those days was very slow, so no tidings of the tourists were expected under a week from the day of their departure, and Adela's first letter was, as may readily be supposed, most welcome. It was a very long epistle, indeed a journal of each day's proceedings. It told how, for the first many miles of the journey, the thoughts of the loving girl were entirely with those she was leaving so far behind, and that she

had half-repent-ed having urged her guardian to allow her to go ; and how that Marie and the boys began to complain of her silence and her sorrowful face, and how she felt it her duty to shake off all gloomy feelings, which she did not find a very difficult task, for they were passing through scenes of great beauty and interest, and her fellow-travellers were full of merriment. Then followed flowing descriptions of mountains, old castles, and all the objects of interest on their route.

“And we have met,” she wrote on the last page, “at the table d’hôte at Dijon, a delightful addition to our party in the person of an English widow, a Mrs. Tremaine ; and as she is going to Neuchâtel to meet her son there, it is arranged that we travel together. She is a charming woman, and all are delighted with her. Poor Mrs. Tremaine speaks French wretchedly ; knows, in fact, very little about the language, and her mistakes are a source of constant amusement to Henri and Jacque. I suppose instinct must have told her that I was English, for on our first meeting she introduced herself to me in my own dear native tongue. Had we been French ladies, we should have embraced each other, but we Saxons are not so demonstrative. I feel quite an important personage, Mrs. Tremaine is so dependent upon me ; for not one of the Pascal family understands any more of English than Mrs.

Tremaine does of French, though Marie is improving much under my tuition. Mrs. Tremaine is so sweet-tempered, so obliging, so full of life, and so amusing, that I think we should be quite dull without her society."

Many times, and with smiles and tears, was Adela's first letter read at Château Cleremont during the week that followed its arrival. There came another dated from Neuchâtel. Like the first, a journal of every day's proceedings, with the description of scenery, &c. The mother and son had met as was arranged between them. Captain Tremaine was handsome and accomplished, but Adela, when she wrote, had been barely introduced to him. "Mrs. Tremaine," she remarked, "has apparently good reason to be proud of her only child. They are all and all to each other, and, like Rhoda, yourself, and me, without a relative nearer than distant cousins. I think both Mrs. and Captain Tremaine will accompany us to Geneva, but nothing is fixed." Enclosed in the letter was a note from Madame Pascal, stating that it would be quite impossible for them to be at home at the time appointed, but that Madame de Richelet might confidently expect to see Adela at the expiration of five weeks from the time she left home. "She is," said the writer, "the picture of health and happiness, and is a great acquisition to

our party. I have bought her a small guitar, and her sweet voice is a great delight to us. She will have told you of our new travelling companions. I never regretted so much before that I do not understand English, for Mrs. Tremaine is a fascinating, and, evidently, a very well-informed woman. She and Adela and Marie are inseparable."

After reading her friend's note Madame de Richelet sat silent and thoughtful, her countenance expressive of displeasure and anxiety.

"I hope, dear Madame," said Rhoda, "you are not annoyed at the tour being prolonged a week?"

"No, love, that would not disturb me, as it is unavoidable, but I think Madame Pascal very indiscreet to allow Adela and Marie to be on such intimate terms, and necessarily much alone, with two perfect strangers, one a handsome and, doubtless, fascinating young man. I do sincerely hope the girls will be very prudent. I should certainly never have allowed such an addition to the party, even at the risk of offending, had I been consulted. We must, however, hope and pray that no evil may arise. Would that I had my sweet dove again under my own care."

Time hung heavily upon the hands of Rhoda and Madame de Richelet; for the next several days they felt, they scarcely knew why, anxious and

depressed ; and more welcome than ever, when the slow week had passed away, was the sight of Adela's handwriting. The letter was addressed to Rhoda. With trembling haste she opened it. There was no journal, but simply a short letter ; the writer was quite well and happy. She briefly mentioned one or two excursions they had made, and some hair-breadth escapes on the part of the boys. Madame Pascal had taken a severe cold, and had for several days been confined to the house, they were still at Geneva, and spent much of their time on the Lake. No mention whatever was made of the Tremaines.

"Cheer up, dear Madame," said Rhoda, after she had read the letter aloud. "Adela, you see, is all right, and will be with us in a fortnight. Mrs. Tremaine and her 'handsome and accomplished son' have, I suppose, taken their departure from Geneva, as Adela makes no allusion to them."

Madame sat silent and thoughtful. Her brow was contracted, and as though not wishing to reveal what was passing through her mind, she, to Rhoda's surprise, rose and left the room.

"Adela could not deceive us," said the anxious guardian to herself, as she wearily threw herself on a couch at the foot of her bed, "but I like not this total silence in reference to the Tremaines. I don't at all agree with Rhoda, that the mother

and son must have left Geneva. I am of opinion that they have not done so, and why no journal for us as before? She knows how every trifling incident connected with herself is interesting to us." And as poor Madame pondered over the short and constrained letter she every minute became more uneasy. She was interrupted in her meditations by the sudden entrance of Rhoda with a letter in her hand.

"Most fortunately," said Rhoda, "before hanging the letter-bag up in the hall, I opened it and found this. Strange we should have overlooked it, but I suppose we could see nothing but dear Adela's handwriting."

The letter was one from Madame Pascal, addressed to Madame de Richelet, who tore it open with nervous haste. She became greatly agitated as she read it, so much so, that Rhoda, who was watching her countenance, exclaimed,

"Tell me the worst! don't keep me in suspense. Has anything happened to Adela?"

"Yes, my worst fears are realised," and Madame, as she said this, threw the letter on to the table, and burst into a flood of tears.

Full of painful apprehensions, Rhoda took up the letter and read as follows, in French, of course :—

"I am grieved to tell you, my dear friend, th

I have been the innocent cause of trouble to our sweet Adela, and, consequently, to you and Miss Elliott. I mentioned to you in a former letter how charmed we were with a Mrs. Tremaine who had joined our party. At Neuchâtel her son was waiting for her according to arrangement, and we gladly received him into our circle. We found him gentlemanly, obliging, and accomplished, and I never for one moment doubted his honour. Without any misgivings I allowed him to accompany the young people in all their excursions, Mrs. Tremaine acting as chaperon, I being unequal to the fatigue of climbing the mountains or of any violent exercise. The most cautious mother could have found no fault with the manner of Captain Tremaine towards Adela and Marie. It was respectful, at the same time friendly. I thought sometimes rather too formal, but I admired his discretion. If he had any preference for either of the girls, I fancied it leaned towards Marie, and I felt somewhat uneasy when I observed that she was not always at ease in his presence. I questioned her a little on the subject, and she became confused and looked so distressed that I changed the conversation, but with no intention of remaining in ignorance of how matters really stood. You may judge of my surprise, when the very same day my daughter-in-law told me that she feared Adela regarded the

Captain as something more than a passing acquaintance, and that she had reason to believe the apparent preference the latter gave to Marie in my presence, was only a ruse to throw me off my guard, and that she more than doubted the sincerity of Mrs. Tremaine. Utterly bewildered I knew not what steps to take, for I was certain Louise would not have unnecessarily warned me, knowing that her communication would completely destroy my pleasure for the rest of the tour. I begged of her not for one moment to lose sight of Adela, I also told my son to, on one excuse and another, monopolise the society of the Captain. I passed a sleepless night, the weight of responsibility pressed so heavily upon me, and I arose without having been able to come to any decision. We all met at the breakfast table. The Captain was brilliant as usual, full of conversation, and apparently at his ease. Both Adela and Marie were silent, and looked pale and anxious. My son and his wife were cold and distant towards Mrs. Tremaine and the Captain, and as soon as the meal was over expressed a wish to have a few words with me in private. They at once left the room and I was about to follow them, when my eye fell upon Adela's deadly pale face. I told Marie to take her to her room. I found my son and his wife in my own private parlour. The

former informed me that the post before breakfast had brought him a letter from a friend, stating that a brother officer had told him that Captain Tremaine and his mother had joined our party at Neuchâtel, and he (my son's correspondent), felt it his duty, knowing that Marie was with us, to put us on our guard. 'The Captain,' he said, 'is not only destitute of religion, but also of moral principle; he is a notorious gambler and devoid of every sense of honour. His mother, poor woman, is wrapped up in him, and is easily persuaded by him to enter into any intrigue which she thinks will promote his present happiness. If it were but for the love of excitement, the Captain will attempt to gain the affections of your sweet sister, and perhaps Madame Pascal may have reason bitterly to repent, as many a mother has done before, having admitted Captain Tremaine into her family circle.' 'Prudence,' concluded my son's friend, 'forbids me writing all I would say to put you on your guard. If you value your sister's happiness, take my advice and decline for the future the society of your two new and dangerous acquaintances.'

"I was no longer undecided as to the course I should adopt. I sought Adela and found her tolerably composed. Marie had evidently been acting the part of comforter, and had succeeded in reassuring her alarmed friend. I felt at once

convinced that Marie was in Adela's confidence. Distressed, and angry at the deception being practised, I, without any prelude, asked Adela, in plain terms, whether Captain Tremaine had attempted to gain her affections, and whether he was or was not more to her than an ordinary friend? Poor Adela's face flushed and paled alternately as she attempted to stammer a reply, an evasive one I feared from the few words I heard. I changed my tone and entreated of her to confide in me as her guardian for the time. She burst into tears, exclaiming, 'Oh, I long to do so, but must not, dare not. You will know all, dear Madame, when we are at home again. Captain Tremaine will then lose no time in seeking an interview with Madame de Richelet, and there will be no more secrecy, and we shall all be so happy.'

"Poor, dear Adela! how unconscious she was that she had revealed all that was necessary for me to know; and as she laid her hand on my arm, and looked full in my face, with an expression of such perfect confidence, her eyes beaming with her new-found happiness, I shrank from the hard task of crushing every hope out of that trusting, loving young heart. But there was no time for delay; and, putting my arm fondly round her, I told her that she and Captain Tremaine must never meet again. In an instant

all colour fled from her cheeks, the smile which was playing round her sweet lips vanished, and with eyes, that only a moment before were so full of tenderness and hope, now expressive but of surprise and alarm. She looked at me for explanation. I drew her to my breast, and kissed her cold forehead. She trembled like a frightened dove. I bid Marie prepare her couch, that I might lay her down when she knew the worst. I told her all; she listened in perfect silence till I had finished speaking, then she broke from my arms exclaiming, 'It is false, utterly false! He is good and noble and true. Take me home! take me home! Dear, dear Rhoda and Madame will befriend me, will believe him, and save him from insult; an enemy has done this to destroy my happiness.' Both Marie and I gazed with astonishment at the lovely girl so changed from the gentle, timid, yielding Adela we had only known. She stood before me, her tall graceful figure drawn to its full height, her colour heightened, her beautiful eyes flashing with indignation, a smile of contempt upon her chiselled mouth, and her small hands clasped tightly together. The effect of my communication upon her was so different to what I had anticipated, and I was so startled at such a display of spirit and in one before so uniformly submissive, it I was at a loss how to proceed. I

knew that reasoning would be of no avail; after a few minutes' consideration, however, I thought it better to take the high hand, and exercise my authority as guardian over her, until she was again under your care. I therefore desired both her and Marie to confine themselves to their room (they both shared one sleeping apartment), and not, unless they wished to incur my heavy displeasure, on any account to leave it without my consent.

"I have written to the last moment and must conclude to save this post. Adieu, dear Madame. Love to Rhoda. Your sympathising and at the same time miserable friend,

MARIE PASCAL.

"*P.S.*—Adela, I understand, wrote to you late last night. You will therefore receive a letter from her with this. We shall leave Geneva this evening. Our exact route home is not fully decided upon, so I cannot tell you at what post-office to address a letter to me. We will leave behind us no clue to our route. I shall endeavour to post you a few lines each day, knowing how intense will be your anxiety. The mails will travel quicker than we shall. Again adieu, MARIE."

When Rhoda had read the letter she sat down and burst into a flood of tears. But they were not altogether tears of sorrow,—relief and thankful-

would be spared. Her warm affections once gained, Madame knew that the clearest proof of Captain Tremaine's real character would be necessary to wean her heart from him. And even then, would she cast him from her? His love for her might be perfectly sincere, and would she have the resolution to let him know that it was her desire that all intercourse between them should cease? Not in her own strength could she do this. In several instances, trifling though they were, Madame had read the characters of the sisters. Rhoda, when once roused to a sense of her duty, walked steadily in the right path, however she may have before blindly stumbled in it. Adela, less headstrong than her sister, rarely went astray, but when she did so, was more difficult to be recalled, wavering and looking back, and suffering herself to be led by her true friends rather than resolutely shaking off the tempter of her own free will.

"Watch over my darling Adela," said Colonel Elliott, when giving his injunctions to Madame on that fatal night before he went to the field of battle, "I fear for her in the hour of temptation more than for my self-willed but brave Rhoda. Guard her from evil influence," and then, overpowered by emotion, he leaned his head on his hand and, sighing heavily, murmured, "Father of

the fatherless, why need I fear ; my orphan children will be in Thy care, Thou wilt preserve them from evil till they join us in our eternal home." And as Madame de Richelet recalled these, as they seemed to her afterwards, dying words of the Christian soldier, she was comforted. "Where is my faith?" she asked herself. Have I forgotten that there is One Who rules all things, and Who cannot err? To Him I commit my precious charge." But doubts and fears again arose within her, not touching the goodness, wisdom, and power of God ; but might not it be His purpose to lay His chastening hand on her and Rhoda, and that through Adela they were to suffer?

In vain did Rhoda use every argument to comfort the afflicted widow. "Adela knows the worst now," said the trusting girl, "and her affection for one she has only known a fortnight cannot be very deep ; she will soon be herself again when she is surrounded by all she took such delight in before she left home."

"We can but pray for her. Of her own strength she can do nothing," was the only remark Madame

y passed away, and in the evening
shold knelt at the family altar, a
was offered up by Madame for the
that she might be preserved from

harm, and in safety return shortly to them,—and Madame's voice faltered, and with difficulty was she able to conclude the simple service. Mary, after she had risen from her knees, looked inquiringly and anxiously first at Madame and then at her young mistress, and read in their countenances that something connected with her beloved Miss Adela was grieving them. She ventured to ask if Miss Adela was ill? a concise negative was the reply, and Mary withdrew perplexed and unhappy, and in her little workroom—"Mary's boudoir," as Adela playfully called it—the faithful servant wept and prayed for her sweet mistress, though she knew not what had befallen her.

The next day a short note arrived from Madame Pascal, which ran as follows:—

"We have not yet left Geneva, for it was not until late last evening that I had decided upon what course to adopt, my family being unwilling to return home without having completed the tour. I, on the contrary, felt every hour more anxious to hasten back and deliver Adela into your hands, and so it was at length decided that my son and his wife, the two boys and Marie, should proceed to Italy, and I and Adela should set off this morning on our homeward journey. You will be relieved to hear that my son had a stormy interview with Captain Tremaine yesterday morning, and that the

latter and his mother, without one word of farewell to any of us, took their departure from Geneva about 5 P.M. I have not seen Adela since I wrote to you yesterday, neither has she left her room. I have questioned Marie, but she, poor child, can only tell me the old story—whispered conversations between Captain Tremaine and Adela, loiterings behind the rest of the party, and so forth. The Captain persuaded Marie to prove her true friendship for Adela by not betraying her secret ; only a few days, he said, and all will then know of my happiness ; but Madame de Richelet must be the first to be told, and she must hear of it only from my lips.

“And so my dear Marie, a novice in such matters, believed that in yielding to his wishes she was only acting towards Adela as any other friend in her circumstances would have done.

“I shall not question Adela on the subject, but will leave it for you to learn from her all that has passed between her and the Captain. She and I leave Geneva in an hour. As we must necessarily pass through Nevers, a letter from you, directed for me at the post-office there, will probably be in time for me to receive it.—Yours, in haste,

“MARIE.”

out a moment's delay Madame de Richelet,

after reading her friend's communication, wrote two letters, one addressed to Adela, the other to Madame Pascal, "Post-Office, Nevers." She briefly told the former how grieved she was to hear of what had happened. She did not upbraid the poor girl, believing, indeed, that her sweet Adela had unwittingly erred. "Justice," she said in her note, "shall be done to Captain Tremaine; every inquiry concerning his antecedents shall be made, and if we find that it is, alas! too true, all that Monsieur Pascal's friend has said of him, you will not need any commands from me to avoid all intercourse with one unworthy of you. But should Captain Tremaine, on the contrary, be a man of honour and a Christian, so that we can ask God's blessing upon your betrothal, then no one will rejoice more than myself in your happiness." To Madame Pascal, Madame de Richelet expressed her gratitude for adopting the only course she herself would have dictated, and begged of her not to over-fatigue herself by travelling too quickly, but to rest at the different towns on her route.

In an hour after Madame Pascal had despatched her last note to Cleremont, the diligence in which she and Adela were to travel drew up at the hotel door. All the Pascal family, with the exception of Marie, were assembled in the hall waiting for Adela, who had not yet left her room, and many

looks, expressive of mingled curiosity and sympathy, were directed towards the staircase. At length the two friends made their appearance. Marie was crying bitterly; Adela was very pale, but perfectly composed. She shook hands cordially with the young Pascals, who rather held back, regarding her in the light of a culprit, knowing only that she was the cause of so much unpleasantness and disappointment. She then tenderly embraced Marie, and bowing stiffly to Monsieur Pascal and his wife, stepped lightly into the diligence, followed by the anxious Madame Pascal. The latter, still suffering from indisposition, could only bear the fatigue of short stages, with long intervals of rest between each, and it was not until the third day after leaving Geneva that she and Adela reached Nevers. She had been able to fulfil her promise, and post a letter daily to Madame de Richelet. Very few remarks had passed between her and Adela, and those not touching upon the subject which most of all engrossed their thoughts.

"Adela," she said in her last, "is well, so she assures me; but she is very pale and has no appetite. She is still very reserved, though I can see it is difficult for her to remain so; and it is evident that she is most anxious to be at home again. She saves me all the fatigue possible,

actuated, I believe, by a double motive ; the first from affectionate sympathy, the second from a desire to preserve my strength, that we may proceed with as little delay as possible."

The two letters from Madame de Richelet were awaiting the travellers at Nevers. Poor Madame Pascal was so thoroughly overcome by fatigue, that, after reading the few lines from her friend, she begged that she might have a couple of hours' rest.

"I hope to sleep," she said to Adela ; "awaken me in two hours, but until then, unless I ring my bell, do not come into my room, so little disturbs me, and I feel that rest is absolutely necessary, and it will do you good also if you will lie down. Remember we have to travel all night."

Adela, whose countenance was full of hope, kissed Madame, saying, "All will be well in the end. See how kindly Madame de Richelet writes."

Madame Pascal read the note which Adela handed to her, and returned it without a remark, only shaking her head forebodingly, for hope she had none.

Adela's countenance and manner immediately changed. "You are determined," she said excitedly, "to think evil of Captain Tremaine, and you will do all you can to prejudice Madame

de Richelet and Rhoda against him, and, perhaps, beset by secret enemies, he may never be able to prove his innocence to the satisfaction of my guardian and my sister."

"Leave me at once, I request of you," said Madame Pascal angrily ; "I must have rest or give up all thought of travelling to-night." Another moment and Madame was alone.

It was sometime after Adela had left Madame Pascal that the latter was able to close her eyes. Then the exhausted and unhappy woman fell into a deep sleep, which was unbroken for three hours. She awoke much refreshed, and, upon looking at her watch, was startled to find it was so late in the afternoon. There was no time to lose, for she and Adela must certainly have dinner before proceeding on their journey. "Adela will have overslept herself, poor girl, or she would surely have disturbed me before now," said Madame to herself, as she hastened along the corridor towards Adela's room. She tapped at the door. There was no answer. She entered, and, to her surprise, found the apartment empty. She hastily glanced round the room. Not a trace of Adela was left. Travelling-bag, and cloak, umbrella, and one or two little packages that Madame had seen carried into the room, were all gone. In the greatest alarm she rang the bell.

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"I think evil of you," said she in Tremaine, and
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could not understand a word she said. She gave me six francs and this note. I suppose she told me who the note was for, but I was no wiser than if she had not opened her lips."

The hostess took the note from her maid and read the address—"For Madame Pascal, No. 14."

"It is for me!" exclaimed poor Madame Pascal, and she snatched the crumpled note from the astonished landlady.

The few lines the note contained were these:—

"Adela has placed herself under my protection. We shall, I hope, be several miles from Nevers before you read this. If you discover our route, pray spare yourself the trouble of following us, for before you could possibly overtake us, my son will have a husband's right to watch over his lovely chosen one. Of Adela's perfect happiness her friends need entertain no fears.—Yours,

"FRANCES TREMAINE."

Madame Pascal slowly read every word, and then sank senseless on the couch.

It was on the evening of the sixth day after Adela's sudden disappearance from Nevers, that Madame de Richelet and Rhoda, both pale and careworn, might have been seen wearily pacing the

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poor things look. They have evidently come a great distance, but they will soon have rest, and so shall we all," and Rhoda's eyes sparkled and the colour rose to her cheeks, and with a light step she hurried up the road to be the first to welcome the travellers.

Madame de Richelet followed at some little distance. On came the carriage; Rhoda had her handkerchief ready to wave, that the attention of those inside might be drawn to her, but the carriage dashed on past her and past Madame de Richelet. The crimson curtains were drawn across the windows. In great trepidation, Rhoda and Madame followed it with their eyes. It stopped at the lodge gates.

"She is come!" they both exclaimed, and ran that they might overtake the cumbrous vehicle before it turned into the avenue leading to the house. But to their dismay the carriage was in a second or two again in motion, and the horses were evidently being urged on at their utmost speed; and ere Rhoda and Madame de Richelet had time to recover themselves (for they were now both standing still in the road), nothing was to be seen in the dusky light, and but for a rumbling sound, every moment becoming fainter, they would have supposed that the whole was a delusion of their over-strained senses. They

were, however, soon roused to action by the sight of the lodge-keeper running towards them, and holding up a letter. They met her, and she told them that a lady in the carriage had desired her to give the letter to Madame de Richelet without delay.

"Was she a stranger?" asked Madame faintly.

"I think not; but she only drew the curtain a little to one side, that she might put down the window, and as soon as I had taken the letter from her hand, and had received her orders, she bade the coachman drive on as quickly as possible, and in an instant was gone. I believe it was Madame Pascal, but so changed, so pale and thin; even her voice was so different, that I don't feel certain about it."

"That will do," said Madame de Richelet, with forced calmness. "Have you a lamp in the lodge? but no, Rhoda, we will read it—when we are alone—together—at home;" and as though she were hurrying a child on, she took hold of Rhoda's hand. But Rhoda needed no force or persuasion, and the two passed rapidly up the avenue and entered the house without being observed. Madame, still holding Rhoda by the hand, as if fearful of losing her, went straight to her room. She shut the door, and seated herself, with Rhoda by her side, upon the sofa. Slowly she opened

the letter ; then she put one arm firmly round her companion's waist, as much to gain as to give support. She began to read the letter aloud, but after the first few words—"I cannot, I dare not see you, for I am alone. She whom I promised so faithfully to bring back to you is gone, never to return to your roof as Adela Elliott"—the letter dropped from Madame's hand, her lips became livid, her eyes assumed a leaden hue, she tried to speak, but her tongue refused to utter a word ; she made an effort to rise, but her limbs were powerless—the devoted, unwearying, self-denying, loving Madame de Richelet was stricken with paralysis.

Now did Rhoda's strength and presence of mind display itself in full force. For a minute or two after Madame's voice had ceased, she sat stunned with the tidings she had heard, and noted not that the arm, which had so tightly encircled her waist, suddenly relaxed its hold. At length she gasped, "Read on ; hide nothing from me."

A few strange, incoherent sounds was the only answer.

She turned sharply round, and beheld the drawn and deadly-pale features of Madame, looking all the more ghastly in the silvery light of the full moon, which had just risen, and whose broad beams fell upon the wreck of her who so lately

was all but perfect in health and matronly beauty.

"Oh dear, Madame. What is the matter?" exclaimed Rhoda, at the same time wringing the bell violently.

Mary rushed into the room followed by the other servants. They laid their poor mistress on the sofa, and despatched the groom for a physician. But why dwell on the distressing scene. Two hours after the seizure, the helpless invalid was laid in her own bed, on one side of which stood the physician, on the other Rhoda, and at the foot the pale and trembling Mary, the last knowing that something terrible had happened besides the illness of Madame, and that something must be connected with her dear Miss Adela. Dr. Le Norman had his finger on the pulse of his patient, at the same time watching her countenance most anxiously. Rhoda stood gazing alternately at her revered friend and at the physician, hoping and praying that she might read in the face of the latter a gleam of hope. Her nerves were at their full tension.

At length Dr. Le Norman rose and beckoned Rhoda to follow him to the other end of the room. She did so, and he whispered, "There is a slight change for the better. Go and lie down now. Your maid will remain with me. I shall not leave

Madame until all immediate danger is past. Your services will be required to-morrow, you and Mary must nurse in turns. Madame must have no one else in attendance upon her. Extreme fretfulness and irritability are inseparable from her disease. She must be humoured in every way and her mind kept as calm as possible. You told me in the drawing-room that some sad news had brought on the attack. No allusion whatever must be made to the unhappy event, whatever its nature. It will probably be days before she remembers it, and then the utmost caution must be used in answering any questions asked by her. Her recovery will be greatly retarded by want of tact and prudence on the part of her nurses. I must, therefore, when I leave the house, which I hope to do in a few hours, confide her solely to the care of you and Mary."

"Then you think she may recover?" and Rhoda's countenance suddenly lighted up.

"I hope she may ; indeed, I think she will. But now I must insist upon your lying down ;" and he led her with gentle force to her room, and there left her alone, no, not alone, for One was with her, and to Him, her only solace in this hour of great sorrow, she fled for refuge, and on her knees poured out her prayers mingled with thanksgiving. The first blow she had received was almost swallowed up in the second, and thankfulness predominated

over every other emotion when she found that Madame not only might, but probably would, recover.

The trusting girl arose from her knees comforted, believing her prayers would be answered. But with the relief from her fears for the life of her dear friend, returned the bitter grief caused by Madame Pascal's communication. This grief had been suddenly checked, but now forced itself upon her with, if possible, more intense agony than at first. Then, the sweet voice of her beloved friend was sounding in her ears, the strong arm of her guardian thrown around her, but now the tongue that would have comforted her was speechless, the protecting arm powerless, and the sympathising eye dim and passionless.

Limited as her home circle had always been, Rhoda had never known what it was to be without one human friend near to whom she could look up for guidance and support ; and as the sense of her isolated position pressed upon her already overburdened spirit, she wept for herself alone. But only for a few minutes did she indulge in such sorrow. Her thoughts quickly passed from herself to her two loved ones. "Where was Adela?" As the question rose to her mind the answer came, "Madame Pascal's letter may tell us." In a moment Rhoda was on her way to the drawir

room, which was in a state of the greatest confusion. After searching for some time she found the precious letter rolled up in poor Madame's shawl. With what eagerness she read the letter can be imagined. The substance of its contents, after telling of Adela's flight, was that Madame Pascal, upon recovering from her swoon, insisted upon steps being at once taken to discover the route of the Tremaines. Before, however, any decided measures could be adopted, the driver of the carriage, hired by Mrs. Tremaine, had returned to Nevers. All the information the man could give was that the party was just in time to secure places in the diligence to — he forgot what place. That the young lady seemed as if she had been crying a great deal, but was not altogether miserable; that her mother, he took her to be, and her brother, were very careful of her, but being foreigners he could not tell a word they said to each other. With this scanty information Madame Pascal was determined to follow Adela till she had overtaken or lost all trace of her. Carrying out her resolution she was in a few hours at the hotel from whence the three fugitives had departed by the diligence. She, of course, ascertained in what direction to continue her pursuit, but her strength utterly failed her. She lay down hoping that a few hours' rest would restore her, but sleep she

could not ; she became feverish, and ere long was in a state bordering upon delirium. A physician was called in. Nothing, he said, but the most perfect rest and quiet could ward off an attack of brain fever. So far as medical skill and good nursing were concerned, Madame Pascal had every advantage, and in a few days the poor English lady, as she was styled, was so far recovered as to be able to leave her room. A note from Mrs. Tremaine, addressed to her at Nevers, was forwarded to her. It informed her that Adela Elliott had that morning been married by special license to Captain Tremaine, that the young couple with Mrs. Tremaine were just embarking for Dover, that they would remain in England a few days and then proceed to Ireland, the Captain's regiment being stationed at Belfast. Upon receiving this note, Madame Pascal abandoned all idea of further pursuit, and though quite unfit to travel, resolved to hasten home without any further delay ; her courage, however, failed her as her sad journey drew towards a close. She could not, she dare not, meet Madame de Richelet and Rhoda, so ere setting out on the last stage, she wrote the letter which had proved so fatal to the loving guardian. She concluded by entreating that neither Madame de Richelet nor Rhoda would seek an interview till she felt a little stronger, and better able to bear

the meeting. She also begged the forgiveness of Madame de Richelet if she had been less vigilant than she ought to have been in the care of the interesting and beautiful girl entrusted to her.

For three hours after Rhoda had left the sick chamber, Dr. Le Norman and Mary watched the invalid, although the remedies applied by the former began, with God's blessing, to produce the desired effect—the breathing became lighter, consciousness slowly returned, the eyesight was partially restored, a few words were with difficulty uttered, sufficiently articulate to be understood, but they had no reference to Adela's flight—the past was for a time a blank to Madame de Richelet,—truly in her case a blessing in disguise. Dr. Le Norman whispered to Mary that she had better go and awaken Miss Elliott, who would, after an undisturbed rest of three hours, be sufficiently refreshed to return to the sick chamber and relieve her (Mary). I may, continued the doctor, venture myself to take a nap in the easy chair, my patient is doing very nicely, and Miss Elliott can rouse me if she observes any change for the worse. Mary, completely worn out with fatigue and anxiety, thankfully accepted the doctor's proposal. She went to Rhoda's room, but found it tenantless, and what surprised her still more, the bed had

evidently not been occupied. Alarmed, she scarcely knew why, she sought her young mistress in all the rooms upstairs, and then, in no little trepidation, inquired from the servants if they had seen her. The housemaid told her that Miss Elliott was asleep on the sofa in the drawing-room, and that she had not liked to disturb her, though the room was in a sad, untidy state.

“No, poor young lady,” said the groom (who had just entered the servants’ hall), “let her sleep, she was in sad trouble about six o’clock. I was waiting for Dr. Le Norman, who had told me I must be in readiness to go to his partner, if no favourable change took place, when I saw Miss Elliott running downstairs; she looked so white and wild, I felt sure that Madame was dead. She rushed into the drawing-room, and began knocking the furniture about, in such a way that I feared she was beside herself with grief. I went softly to the door, and saw her pick up a letter. She sat down on the sofa, and read it, and then she was nearly frantic. She wrung her hands, and I heard her say, ‘Adela, darling Adela, she will never come back, they have enticed her away from us, and will not let us see her again, my poor sister. O papa, papa,’ and then she cried aloud, and tears ran down my face, I am not ashamed to own it. I

was so sorry for the dear, good young lady, who has been such a blessing to the country round, ever since she came among us; there is not man, woman, or child but would sacrifice anything to save her from an hour's sorrow." He could not trust himself to say more, but turned away to hide his emotion.

Mary stood pale and silent, till just as he was leaving the room, she exclaimed, "Stay, Frederick, did you hear anything more about Miss Adela?"

"No."

Poor Mary! How much longer was she to be kept in suspense. She knew, and that was grief enough to her, that Madame de Richelet's attack was attributed to sad tidings which had arrived of her dear Miss Adela. All through the night she had longed to exchange a few words with Miss Elliott, but in vain had she watched for an opportunity of doing so, and now she could not find it in her heart to disturb her. And so the devoted servant returned to the invalid's room. About an hour afterwards, Rhoda, pale and haggard, made her appearance, and having assured herself that Madame could be safely left for a few minutes, took Mary by the hand, and led her into the dressing-room.

She then told her the sad tale of Adela's elope-

ment, and for a while mistress and maid wept together. But after a few minutes, Rhoda, with a great effort, composed herself, and, desiring Mary to go and lie down, took up her position by the bedside of Madame, who now with a faint smile recognised her. Rhoda could scarcely refrain from throwing herself on the bosom of her friend and giving vent to her feelings of thankfulness, for with that smile her sense of loneliness had departed.

A week had passed away. Madame had no relapse, and steadily improved, but her memory had not yet returned, and Rhoda had still to bear her trials in silence, save when Mary, who grieved sadly for the loss of her sweet young mistress, sought her sympathy. One letter had been received from Adela; she begged Madame de Richelet to forgive her for having taken such an important step without consulting her; but she expressed no penitence, and dwelt warmly upon her happiness as the wife of one she loved more than words could tell. This letter, which had been so eagerly looked for, failed to comfort the anxious Rhoda. Constraint and caution were too apparent in every line; it was altogether so different to Adela's naturally easy, open style, that Rhoda was satisfied that each sentence had been dictated by Captain Tremaine or by his mother.

No apology was sent to Madame Pascal for the treatment she had received; no reference was indeed made to the naturally indignant lady. To add to Rhoda's disappointment and distress, Adela gave no address telling where a letter would reach her, so the almost broken-hearted Rhoda was still alone with her great grief. It would have been an unspeakable relief to her if she could have written to her sister, telling her how she still loved her, and of Madame de Richelet's illness. She was sure that Adela would, even at the risk of displeasing her husband, hasten to her, unless, indeed, she was a prisoner in her new home. She knew that her gentle, affectionate sister, though she had so seriously erred, was not changed; the cold, heartless letter did not deceive her, and she paced the room, impatiently chafing with sisterly sympathy at the fetters she knew Adela longed to break when she penned that letter. Fondly did poor Rhoda's gaze rest upon the signature "Adela," then bursting into tears, she for a time wept and sobbed over her disappointed hopes, indeed, more remote than ever seemed the prospect of again seeing her dear sister. She had no one to converse with on the subject, for Madame, although her memory was gradually returning, had as yet but a faint recollection that Adela had gone on a tour with some

friends, consequently expressed no surprise at her absence. One short unsatisfactory visit Rhoda had paid to Madame Pascal, who was still very weak. Unfortunately for Rhoda, Madame Pascal had contracted a very low opinion of Adela's principles; this was not surprising, and Rhoda found it impossible to remove the sad impression made upon the mind of the aggrieved lady, who would not, for one moment, entertain Rhoda's opinion that Adela's meeting with the Tremaines at Nevers was quite unexpected on the part of the former. Madame Pascal said that she believed the whole was a well-arranged plot on both sides, and that the anxiety and affection displayed by Adela during the last hour or two she was with her, was only a ruse to render her (Madame Pascal) less vigilant. Rhoda indignantly declared that her sister was utterly incapable of such deception, and that she would, doubtless, when she wrote, give a full explanation, and prove that her conduct towards Madame Pascal was unpremeditated.

"And you, of course, will believe what your sister says," returned Madame Pascal, in a tone which could not be mistaken.

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Rhoda, with flashing eyes; "you dare not surely insinuate that my sister is capable of telling an untruth?"

Madame Pascal became very pale. "I am still very weak," she said faintly ; "at some future time I may be better able to discuss the painful subject."

Rhoda arose, and, after taking a formal leave of Madame Pascal, returned to Cleremont, resolving never to mention her sister's name again beyond her own home.

During the next fortnight Madame de Richelet improved rapidly, and before another letter arrived from Adela, she was again in full possession of her mental faculties, and could not only sympathise with Rhoda, but, as of yore, direct and advise her. This was, indeed, a comfort to the sorely-tried Rhoda, who was also greatly relieved by finding that Adela in her second letter gave her address. This was in the North of Ireland, Captain Tremaine having joined his regiment. Adela wrote as before, evidently under the direction of her husband or her mother-in-law. She said she was well and happy, and had entered upon a scene of gaiety she was little prepared for. She dwelt upon the beauty of the scenery of the neighbourhood, and described a few of the families with whom she had already become acquainted. The letter was upon the whole quite as unsatisfactory as its predecessor. Captain Tremaine had the audacity, as Rhoda expressed it, to add the following postscript :—

"My friends are perfectly charmed with my beautiful bride, and are vying with each other in their attentions to her. Pray be in no anxiety on her account."

"Adela does not know that was added to her letter," exclaimed Rhoda, as she indignantly tore away the few words, intended more as an insult than a solace. Rhoda's impulse was in answer to this letter, to unburden her heart to her sister, to tell of all her affection, anger, and distress. It would be a long sad letter, commencing with the day she had first heard her sister's name coupled with that of Captain Tremaine, and ending with her present anxiety and disappointment.

But Madame de Richelet would not allow this. "Remember, my dear girl," she said, "that Adela is the wife of Captain Tremaine. Say nothing that will irritate him; he loves Adela, I doubt not, as sincerely as his selfish nature will allow, and he is justly proud of her; but he is void of principle, and I tremble for the happiness of my darling, apart from the sorrow I know she is suffering on our account. Every bitter word of yours will, sooner or later, be used as an instrument of torture by Captain Tremaine, should he weary of the gentle, sensitive creature, he now professes to almost worship."

Rhoda, with her usual good sense, yielded to the

wish of her guardian ; and so it was that letters, constrained and unsatisfactory, though ever most affectionate, were interchanged once a fortnight, without any prospect of the sisters meeting.

Weeks rolled by, but Rhoda did not recover her spirits ; and the nearer Madame de Richelet approached convalescence, and her devoted nurse was consequently relieved from anxiety, the more she pined after her who had been her companion from infancy. Her health, with continual fretting, began to give way, and Madame wisely resolved to try the effect of entire change of scene and air. Rhoda had no morbid wish to be allowed to remain at home and nourish her grief, but entered into all Madame's plans for leaving France for a time. Not thinking it desirable that the château should be shut up all through the damp winter, Madame considered herself fortunate in meeting with a quiet family to occupy it during her absence.

All arrangements were quickly made ; and in a fortnight she and Rhoda, with their faithful servants, Frank and Mary, landed at Dover, and from thence proceeded at once to Hastings, where Madame engaged a furnished house for two months. The anxious guardian was soon rewarded for any sacrifice she had made in leaving her comfortable home, by seeing the

object of her solicitude rapidly improve both in health and spirits. New acquaintances were formed, and Rhoda was, doubtless, benefited by a little cheerful society; but, as was the case in France, her heart was with the suffering poor. She sought them out, relieved, comforted, and encouraged them; and with all the warmth and energy of her character, entered into any schemes formed by others for their spiritual and temporal welfare. Her genuine piety, sound judgment, and active business habits rendered her a valuable help to those who, from their age and experience, took the lead in all works of benevolence; and when the two months were expired, a formal appeal was made to Madame de Richelet by her new friends to make Hastings her home during her stay in England.

Madame gracefully acknowledged the compliment paid to herself and Miss Elliott, and informed her petitioners that she and Miss Elliott were so well pleased with their present abode, that they had not the slightest intention of changing it till they returned to France, which they had arranged to do early in May.

The winter passed rapidly away, and in the early spring Madame de Richelet and Rhoda received the welcome tidings that Adela was the happy mother of a lovely girl, and was so well

that she hoped in a few days to write herself, giving a full description of her little darling. Captain Tremaine wrote to announce the important event.

“How strange,” said Rhoda, “that the Captain’s letter to you, dear Madame, should have crossed mine to Adela !”

And it was singular ; for Rhoda had written to tell Adela of her own happiness. She was, with the entire approbation of her guardian, betrothed to a young clergyman, newly appointed to the rectory of — ; and as there was no reason to delay the marriage, preparations were being made for it to take place in the course of a month. Both Rhoda and her future husband expressed an earnest wish that Madame would, for a time at least, take up her abode with them, but the latter resolutely declined doing so, her chief argument being that she would keep a home for Adela, in case the latter should ever need one.

No untoward circumstance occurred to frustrate the plans of the little party at Hastings, and on the first of May Rhoda became the wife of the Reverend —. But not till a week later, when Madame bade Rhoda farewell on the quay at Dover, did the former fully resign her charge. She embraced Rhoda for the last time ; and, whilst tears streamed down her pale, thin face, she placed the hand

of the no less agitated bride into that of her husband, saying—

“Take her as a precious gift from heaven ; she will prove herself a crown of glory to you.”

Unable to utter another word, she stepped on to the vessel, and, without trusting herself to give one look towards the spot where the young couple stood, she went down to her cabin.

Frank accompanied Madame de Richelet to France. Rhoda retained Mary as her maid ; but ere another year had flown, Frank returned to England to claim Mary as his bride.

Six months after Rhoda's marriage, Captain Tremaine's regiment was ordered out to India. A letter from Adela, a few days before they sailed, was the only intimation Rhoda received of what was taking place, and bitterly she reproached Captain Tremaine for not allowing his wife to write in time to enable her to bid her sister farewell.

Several years passed away. Adela was in Calcutta ; she wrote pretty regularly, but her letters continued constrained and unsatisfactory. Madame de Richelet was still in her own home in France, not living alone, for she had adopted a nephew of her late husband, intending to make him her heir. Poor Mary had been called upon to bear a heavy trial. Within two years after her marriage, she

lost her kind, good husband. Frank died at Cleremont. This invaluable servant, when he lost his beloved master at Waterloo, became one of the household of Madame de Richelet. Intelligent, active, and conscientious, his mistress placed the utmost confidence in him; and when his sudden illness ended fatally no one, save his childless widow, felt his death so keenly as did she. Ever after her attack of paralysis, Madame had been more dependent upon Frank than before her seizure. Whenever she left the house, he was her constant attendant; so long as she was too weak to walk, he would suffer no one to draw her in her invalid's chair but himself; and to him alone was entrusted any commission at a distance which required despatch and prudence, and he was the "custodian," as she playfully called him, of her castle. No wonder that poor Madame was bewildered as well as shocked and grieved, when she looked upon the corpse of him who had, by his devotion to her comfort and interest, rendered himself invaluable to her. But there was a heart-broken widow to be comforted; and the bereaved Mary received, as may be supposed, all the care her sympathising mistress could bestow upon her. Though bowing meekly to the will of her heavenly Father, Mary felt at times that the blow was almost heavier than

she could bear. Vain was every effort of her anxious mistress to arouse her from a state of depression, most distressing not only to herself, but to all around her; and it was a relief to Madame when Rhoda wrote suggesting that Mary should return to England, and make her future home with her. Mary gratefully acceded to this proposal. Her few preparations were quickly made, and ere long she had accomplished the long journey from France to the North of England, and was received by Rhoda and her husband, at the rectory of —, with a warmth of sympathy and affection she was scarcely prepared for.

“You must allow me to show you to your rooms,” said Rhoda, after the first greeting in the hall was over, and she led the trembling, almost overpowered, widow upstairs. She opened a door on the landing, “This is your bedroom,” said she, and Mary was ushered into a pretty, and evidently newly fitted up, apartment. But the neat chintz drapery, and the cheerful bay window, opening upon a balcony filled with plants, were lost upon Mary, she only saw a snow-white baby’s cot; she sprang to it, and, drawing aside the curtain, beheld a lovely infant, Rhoda’s first-born. The babe opened her eyes—dark blue. For a while

Mary dare not trust herself to speak, then, looking at Rhoda with a countenance full of emotion, she said—

“You did not tell me how wonderfully like *her* she is ; surely she will be named Adela.”

“Not so,” said Rhoda, with a choking voice, “she is to be named after my husband’s mother.” Rhoda lifted the baby out of her cot, and then, desiring Mary to follow her into the next room, which was fitted up as a nursery, requested her to seat herself in a rocking-chair. Mary did as she was directed, and Rhoda, laying the baby on her knee, said, “She will comfort you.” And Mary was comforted, even as she had been comforted twenty years before by the infant Adela.

At the expiration of six years after Adela’s departure from England, Rhoda became very anxious about her. No answers had been received to the last three letters she had sent to Calcutta. Upon making inquiries, her husband found that Captain Tremaine’s regiment had been removed to a very remote station in the Punjaub. Rhoda procured the address of her sister, and wrote to her, but still no reply came to relieve her intense anxiety. At length the sad tidings reached her, through a friend residing in India, that Captain Tremaine had, in a gambling transaction, quarrelled with a brother officer, that a duel, in which the

captain had severely wounded his opponent, had been the consequence, and that the former had disappeared with his wife and child, and no one knew to what part of the country he had fled. The effect produced upon Rhoda by this melancholy news may be easily imagined. Her husband spared neither expense nor trouble in his endeavours to learn a few more particulars, but without success. For a year no trace of the Tremaines was discovered ; then a letter arrived, which, whilst it extinguished the feeble ray of hope which lingered in the breast of Rhoda, put an end to the torturing suspense which was destroying her peace, and making sad inroads upon her health. The letter was addressed to her husband, and he being absent at the time it was delivered, and seeing that it bore a foreign postmark, she hastily tore it open, and read the following :—

“DEAR —, I enclose you a note I have received from Captain Tremaine. I leave you to communicate to your dear wife the sad intelligence it contains. In great haste, with much sympathy.
—Yours sincerely, REGINALD ACKLAND.”

With trembling hand, Rhoda opened Captain Tremaine's note and read—

“DEAR ACKLAND,—This is to tell you that my poor wife is at length at rest. Unable to battle

with disgrace and poverty, she has sunk into an untimely grave. Pity me, for I am a wretched being, a solitary wanderer, without friends or home. Would that I were laid by the side of my sweet Adela! Ere you read this I shall be many hundred miles from the town where I am posting this, the only letter I have written since I became an outcast.—Your miserable friend,

“FREDERICK TREMAINE.”

Rhoda's husband entered the room, as she was reading the fatal tidings. Struck with the expression of her countenance he exclaimed, “My dear, what has happened? no sad news, I trust, of your sister?”

“I have no sister, Adela is dead,” and with these words Rhoda fell senseless on the floor.

Herbert closed the manuscript, saying, “My father's story is ended.” For a few minutes silence prevailed throughout the room, broken only by the sobs of Constance.

Amy was also in tears, and on her shoulder was hidden the face of her friend Adelaide. Herbert was buried in deep thought, and Alfred, who had for the last two hours been an attentive listener, quietly left the room. With the exception of a hurried dinner, there had only been one interrup-

tion during the reading of the manuscript. This was caused by the arrival of a note from Mr. Fitzallen to his wife. The servant brought the note into the drawing-room, and handed it to Amy, who at once carried it to her mother.

"Is the messenger waiting, William?" asked Herbert.

"Yes, sir; he is a Chilston boy."

Conny at once disappeared, but returned in a few minutes looking disappointed.

"Gained any information about the mysterious travellers?" asked Herbert, as she entered the room.

"Not much," was the reply in a disconsolate tone. "I wish papa had chosen a more intelligent messenger. I asked the lad if he knew who had arrived at the Swan. His answer was, 'I only know one of them, and that is his Reverence,' and as he said this he pulled his front lock out of respect to me, I suppose, as the daughter of his Reverence. 'But who,' I asked, 'have arrived in a carriage?' 'Don't know,' was his provoking reply. 'Two came inside, and a nigger at the top.' 'Of what sex were those inside?' was my next question. He stared at me, and said, 'S-e-c-t-s? I know nothing about sects,' and then, as if suddenly recollecting himself, he darted off at full speed. I ran after him, wet

as it was, as far as the gate, begging of him to stay and tell me more about the travellers, but he only called out that he must get home before dark, for the nigger might be about, and then he was out of sight in a minute."

Conny's listeners, though they shared her disappointment, laughed heartily. Their mirth was, however, soon checked by the entrance of Amy, looking pale and sad.

"Mamma," she said, "seems very nervous and poorly. I wish she had come down to dinner; but I dare say she was afraid that we should ask her some questions that might distress her. She is now quite excited, being impressed with the idea that the invalid traveller may be a son or a daughter of her sister; Aunt Adela, I suppose I should say."

"How delightful if it should be so," exclaimed Conny.

"I do not sympathise with you in your prospective happiness," said Alfred; "a confirmed invalid cousin whom we never knew will not, in my opinion, be a great acquisition to our family circle. The house will have to be kept unpleasantly quiet. But what does papa say in his note, Amy?"

"Only that the invalid traveller continues so prostrate that we must not expect him home with

the strangers to-night, but they will in all probability be here to-morrow. It is the postscript, only a few words, which has raised mamma's expectations—"You must prepare yourself for a great surprise."

"Can the invalid possibly be Madame de Richelet?" suggested Mr. Middleton. "If the good lady be still living, she must be very aged."

Herbert shook his head.

"It will not be Madame de Richelet," said he; "there need be no mystery about her; she is still residing at Cleremont. I know mamma corresponds with her, but through her nephew, young Henri de Richelet, for poor Madame is almost blind; but we know very little of her, or rather, I should say, *knew* very little of her till now, for she is seldom mentioned in our presence; indeed, mamma alway seems to shrink from any reference to her youthful days."

"Then do you think your mother has never seen Madame de Richelet since her marriage?" asked Mr. Middleton.

"I strongly suspect," said Herbert, after a few minutes thought, "that my father and mother paid her a visit about twelve years ago. They went to France for six weeks, and we children went to Bath, and spent a happy month with our grandmother, who lives there. But I am more than

ever anxious to finish the manuscript. I was just in the middle of the scene on the terraced roof at Cleremont."

The speaker, without any further delay, resumed his interesting task, relieved occasionally, as before dinner, by Mr. Middleton, and completed it ere the bell rang for family worship.

CHAPTER VII.



Y mother has passed a sleepless night," said Herbert the following morning to Mr. Middleton, when the latter made his appearance in the breakfast room ; "and she hopes you will excuse her remaining upstairs. She will, if possible, see you for a few minutes before you leave."

"I am indeed sorry," returned Mr. Middleton, "to find that she is no better. I trust, however, that her mind as regards the mysterious travellers will soon be set at rest. I regret more than I can tell you that I am obliged to leave Lyth this morning. I wish much I had not arranged to meet Dysart at Hornpool to-day. It is really tantalising that, interested as I am in what is passing here, I must miss what may prove the finishing-touch to a most affecting tale of real life. You will not fail to write me a few lines by to-morrow's post, though I expect to be with you again on Saturday."

An hour later Mr. Middleton had taken his

departure. As he and Herbert were exchanging a few last words at the gate, Alfred joined them, carrying a book under one arm, and evidently prepared for a walk.

"Where are you intending to study Greek this morning?" said Herbert, reading the title of the book.

"Not intending to study anywhere," replied Alfred, with mock solemnity; "I am going to Chilston to consult papa about a difficult passage in my exercise."

"Perhaps I can help you," said Herbert smiling, at the same time gently sliding the book from under his brother's arm.

"Nay, thank you," returned the latter; "I would rather have papa's judgment on the subject. Excuse me hurrying away, Mr. Middleton. Good-bye, keep up your spirits, faint heart, &c., you know——. Tell mother, Herbert, she shall not be kept much longer in suspense;" and with these words the merry-hearted boy turned quickly into the road leading to Chilston.

Mr. Middleton's face flushed, and Herbert laughed outright, not so much at his friend's confusion, but from the fact that the perplexed Greek student had gone without his book.

"I dare say he will never discover his loss," said Herbert, "and I am glad I have saved him the

trouble of carrying it. I hope he will not stay long at Chilston, and will come back on Cox, for my mother is working herself into a state of feverish excitement, and I fear will be really ill if kept much longer in suspense. Her nerves were tried too much yesterday morning."

In order that our readers may be prepared for the scene which took place at the rectory, a few hours after Mr. Middleton had bidden adieu to his hospitable friends, we must change the scene from Lyth to Chilston, a village situated about six miles inland.

It was the close of the day before that on which Mr. Fitzallen had received the note, begging him to hasten to Chilston, that a heavily-laden travelling carriage was seen approaching the village inn. A crowd of children followed the vehicle, for not only were the carriage and postilion an attraction, but the rumble contained what was to them a great curiosity in the form of a dark mulattress. These youthful observers were, however, quickly dispersed by the landlord of the inn and his wife, who had for some minutes been standing on the door-step watching the over-heated and jaded horses toil with their burden up the slightly ascending road.

Scarcely had the carriage stopped when the mulattress sprang from her elevated seat, and im-

mediately opened the carriage door, to ascertain the condition of the occupants, who were both ladies.

“Mamma seems quite exhausted, Haidée,” was the answer the servant received to her anxious inquiries, from a beautiful girl, of about nineteen years of age.

“My poor mistress,” said Haidée; “we must take her into the house and lay her on a couch.”

Turning to the landlady, Mrs. Greyson, Haidée begged her to assist in lifting the invalid out of the carriage. So prostrated as to be scarcely able to help herself in the least, a lady, apparently about forty years of age, was gently moved from the carriage, and, supported between the mistress of the hotel and her own maid, with difficulty entered the house. No sooner was she placed upon the sofa in the parlour than she fainted.

Mrs. Greyson was in a state of great alarm, and at once proposed to send for the surgeon; but Haidée was evidently accustomed to see her mistress in her present sad condition, and without any hesitation applied remedies, which she appeared to feel confident would have the desired effect. Taking from a travelling-case a phial, she poured a small quantity of the contents into a glass, and with a feather applied it to the lips of the invalid, whilst the young lady rubbed the hands of her

unconscious mother with eau de Cologne. In about ten minutes the sufferer opened her eyes, and slowly looked round the room, as if in search of some one.

"Dear mamma, speak to me!" said her trembling daughter. "I am here; do you not know me? I am, indeed, with you," and the poor girl kissed the cold, blue lips of her almost dying mother, who faintly said—

"My sister, my sister! Oh, let me see her!"

"She is not here, mamma," replied the girl, soothingly; "but have a little patience, and you will be with her soon. How far is Lyth from here?" continued she, addressing Mrs. Greyson, who was standing near the door.

"Six miles; across a beautiful flat country, ma'am."

"Do you think, Haidèe," said the invalid, "that I can bear the remainder of the journey? If not, send a messenger to Lyth."

"I do not think, dear mistress, that there will be any reason to prevent your travelling a few miles further this evening. You are much better already, a cup of tea, and half an hour's rest in this quiet parlour, will do wonders. I will go and speak about some fresh horses, for those that have brought us here are quite fatigued."

An unexpected obstacle, however, presented

itself. Chilston possessed no post-horses, neither could any be procured nearer than Lyth. Haidée, in great trouble, returned to the parlour, in order that she might acquaint her mistress with the new difficulty which stood in the way of their further progress until the next day. She had found upon entering the sitting-room that the invalid had fallen into a quiet slumber. Her daughter was sitting near the sofa, but immediately arose when she saw the servant's countenance, which betrayed that the owner was perplexed and uneasy. Laying her hand upon Haidée's arm, she whispered—

“If you desire to speak to me, come into another room. Do not let us disturb mamma.”

The two walked into the public dining-room, which was untenanted, and there held a long consultation. Their concluding remarks were as follows—the young lady was speaking:—

“I am,” said she, “decidedly in favour of our remaining here all night. Mamma is sleeping comfortably now, and a few hours of perfect rest will strengthen her for the excitement she will have to go through whenever our long journey is completed.”

“Rest,” replied Haidée, “is very necessary for your mother; but she is becoming so impatient to see your aunt, that she will never consent to be separated from her for an entire night, when only

six miles lie between them. If she cannot leave here this evening, she will send for her sister, and you will agree with me that the meeting should take place in a house where my mistress would be surrounded by every comfort."

"Then, do you dread the consequences of the interview between mamma and Aunt Fitzallen?"

"God has wonderfully supported my dearest mistress hitherto, and we need not despair now; still we must be prepared for the natural result of violent agitation in your mother's weak state. However, I fear we shall have no choice, for it is too late to send six miles for horses this evening, and the post-boy tells me that his will not be fit to move again till to-morrow."

"It is, perhaps, as well. Mamma will be obliged to submit to circumstances, and she has already been too much fatigued to-day. Would that this were over, and we were with our friends!"

When Miss Tremaine—for such was, indeed, the young lady's name—and Haidée had finished their conversation in the dining-room, they returned to the parlour, and found Mrs. Tremaine still sleeping. An hour and a half passed away, and the invalid did not awake. Miss Tremaine then requested her servant to see the landlady, and make arrangements for their accommodation till the next morning.

It was between nine and ten o'clock when Mrs. Tremaine awoke. She was surprised to find that it was so late, and was much disappointed to hear that she would have to remain at Chilston all night. She was, however, very drowsy, and her daughter and Haidée had no difficulty in persuading her to allow them to assist her upstairs. She was so worn out, both in mind and body, that no sooner did she lay her head upon the pillow than she was again asleep. A bed and a couch stood in the room the travellers were to occupy for the night. Haidée took possession of the latter. Miss Tremaine lay down by the side of her mother; and for four hours the three wearied ones slept profoundly.

About two o'clock in the morning, Miss Tremaine and the servant were suddenly awoke by the sound of Mrs. Tremaine's voice. She was exclaiming—

"It is I, your own once-loved sister. Kiss me, sister! once more, before I am gone for ever."

Haidée started from her couch, and in one moment was by the side of her mistress, whom she found sitting up in bed, with her hands clasped in an imploring attitude.

"Mamma, mamma! are you dreaming?" asked the terrified daughter. "Do, dear mamma, lie down."

Mrs. Tremaine heeded not her child, but besought, in heart-rending accents, her sister to look kindly upon her.

Haidée put her arm around her mistress, and begged her to compose herself, but Mrs. Tremaine pushed her away, saying angrily—

“Away, away with you! you have kept me so long from her that now she does not know me! Look at her; she turns from me, and will not kiss me. Stay, sister, stay!” and she would have sprung out of bed had not Haidée prevented her.

Mrs. Greyson was immediately roused, and, seeing that the invalid was delirious, sent a messenger at once for the surgeon, Mr. Markham, who in a very short time arrived. He at once administered a composing draught, which was not slow in taking effect. Mrs. Tremaine, without offering the slightest resistance, allowed Mr. Markham to lay her down, and, closing her eyes, appeared to be falling asleep. The surgeon stood for several minutes with his finger resting on her pulse, and then bending his head down, listened for a while to her breathing. Motioning to Haidée that she must follow him, he left the room.

“Your mistress,” said he, as soon as they were alone, “is very ill—worse, I fear, than you have

any idea of—though I apprehend no immediate danger, if she can be kept perfectly quiet.” He then asked several questions relating to Mrs. Tremaine, and the answers he received astonished him greatly. When he had heard all that was necessary for him to know of the history of the mother and daughter, he said—

“I cannot wonder that the mind of your mistress, weak as she is, should give way under such exciting circumstances. I am only surprised that she has borne up so long. A little rest now, however, is absolutely necessary. It is very well you were unable to proceed to Lyth last evening; the poor sufferer would, probably, by this time have been beyond the power of human aid, but if she sleeps for a few hours, she may be perfectly calm and collected when she awakes.”

After giving Haidée the strictest injunctions that she was not to allow her mistress to see any one who could possibly excite her till he called again, he left the house. He returned in an hour or two, and found his patient composed, but very weak. She still begged either to be taken to Lyth, or to have Mrs. Fitzallen sent for; but Mr. Markham would not comply with either of her wishes.

“Your life,” said he, in answer to her earnest appeal, “is in no immediate danger if you remain

for a few hours tolerably quiet ; but I will not answer for the consequences of any great excitement this morning. You must remember, Mrs. Tremaine," and as he spoke he laid his hand kindly upon her arm, "that you are now getting amongst friends with heads older," and he pointed to his own whitened locks, "and, in some respects, wiser than your own ; and we must not let you kill yourself before we have well seen you."

Mrs. Tremaine looked eagerly at Mr. Markham, and whispered, "Then, do you know who I am? Do you know that I am Adela Tremaine, Mrs. Fitzallen's sister, and do you know Mrs. Fitzallen?"

"To be sure I do, and her good husband, and her beautiful family also. Often, and yet not often enough, they drive over here and spend a long day with me and my old lady ; but you must keep yourself quiet."

Mrs. Tremaine was about to speak, when he said—

"Tell me nothing, I know all about you ; so not another word."

"But do tell me, is my sister well? is she happy?"

"Yes, yes, well and happy ; at least, happy when she is not thinking of you. There, now, are you satisfied?" and the doctor tried to look im-

patient, and as if he would not answer another question, but a tear silently stole down his face.

Mrs. Tremaine raised her eyes to heaven, and was for a few minutes engaged in prayer. She then, in a feeble voice, asked Haidée to come near, as she wished to speak to her. The servant put her ear almost close to her mistress' lips, who said—

“This gentleman will tell you all that you are to do. In making any further arrangements, consult him, and not me.”

Turning to Mr. Markham, she asked him when he thought she might see her sister.

“That will, humanly speaking, depend upon yourself. I dare not take you to her, nor send for her until you are slightly recruited. I think we had better first try the strength of your nerves, by introducing you to her husband. I will, if you wish it, send for him.”

The colour mounted to the temples of the invalid, and her hand trembled, showing Mr. Markham that great prudence was necessary, as she eagerly said—

“Yes, yes ! send for him ; lose no time. How soon can he be here ? ”

The doctor feared that he had, even in making this proposal, ventured too far ; but he could not recall his words, and it seemed cruel to disappoint

her ; so he left her, saying that he would at once write a note to Mr. Fitzallen. For this purpose he went into the parlour. He, however, found the room occupied by Miss Tremaine, who, having been overcome with fatigue, was asleep on the sofa. With an expression of deep pity, Mr. Markham gazed upon the beautiful girl.

“Poor creature !” said he, to himself ; “you are young to have known so much sorrow, and your trials are not yet over. It is well for you that you are near to one who will be a second mother to you !”

Not wishing to disturb the sleeper, the doctor gently left the room ; and, going home, he at his own house wrote the note which Mr. Fitzallen received. The rector, as you are aware, lost no time in setting off to Chilston, and for the first mile or two urged his horse on at full speed. By degrees, however, he allowed Cox to slacken his pace, and he began to wonder what friends were on their way to Lyth, hoping, as he supposed, to be benefited by the sea air. It is useless to repeat the names of the different families which passed through his mind, as being possibly the party detained at Chilston, but by the time he had accomplished his journey, he was so buried in thought that he unconsciously let Cox walk leisurely past the door of the Swan. He was startled from his reverie by

the dark Haidèe, who, suddenly stepping up to his side, and taking hold of the rein, caused the rector to utter an exclamation of surprise.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Haidèe, "but you are Mr. Fitzallen, I believe?"

"I am." Perceiving his mistake in having passed the inn door, the rector inquired, "Are you the servant of the invalid traveller?"

"I am, sir; my mistress is staying at the hotel, and will be most thankful that you have come."

In another minute Mr. Fitzallen had entered the inn. Haidèe opened the parlour door, and the rector was immediately ushered into the presence of Miss Tremaine. He was prepared to greet some old friend, but great was his surprise to see a perfect stranger, in the form of a lovely girl, reclining on the sofa. She had evidently been asleep, and, in some confusion, started from the couch when she perceived that a gentleman was in the room.

Somewhat embarrassed, the uncle and niece stood opposite to each other, but suddenly the blush that had overspread the face of the latter disappeared and left her cheeks colourless; her heart beat, and she leaned against the arm of the sofa for support. Could the clergyman before her (for the dress of the rector betrayed his profession) be her uncle, thought she.

Mr. Fitzallen, perceiving the agitation of the interesting stranger, gazed earnestly at her. "I know that face," said he to himself, "where have I seen it? Those long fair ringlets, and deep blue eyes, and that beautiful countenance, are familiar to me, but where?" After a few seconds, he exclaimed, seizing her hand, "It is, it is Adela's child."

"And you are my uncle," said she faintly.

Most tenderly did the rector embrace his niece, and then, placing her on the sofa, he begged her to tell him how it was that she was there, and where she had come from.

"We have come from America, and should have been with you last evening, but we could procure no horses. Mamma was so ill in the night that the surgeon will not allow her to be removed this morning."

"Your mamma!" said Mr. Fitzallen, in astonishment; "we never heard that Captain Tremaine was married again."

"Papa," replied Miss Tremaine, equally surprised, "was never married but once; at least I feel almost certain that mamma was his first wife."

"This is very strange," thought Mr. Fitzallen; "but doubtless she was very young when her mother died, and if her father married again soon

after Adela's death, her child would, unless she had been told, never know but that it was her own mother who had reared her.

The rector, therefore, deemed it prudent to ask no questions relating to the present Mrs. Tremaine. Fortunately, Mr. Markham at this moment made his appearance.

"Ah! my good friend," said he, as soon as he saw Mr. Fitzallen, "you have indeed lost no time. I intended to have been here to receive you, and to introduce you to your niece."

"I have only just arrived," replied the rector, "and have scarcely yet had time to look at her."

"Then, I fear, you will think me rather unkind, for I must separate you for a short time. Miss Tremaine, may I request you to let me have a little private conversation with your uncle?"

"Certainly; indeed I am anxious to go upstairs and see how mamma is."

As soon as she had left the room, and the gentlemen were alone, Mr. Markham remarked—

"You seem quite unnerved, rector, but I cannot be surprised at it. We must, however, lose no time in arranging whether the meeting between the sisters must take place here or at Lyth."

"Meeting! sisters!" exclaimed Mr. Fitzallen, starting to his feet. "What do you mean?"

"Has not Miss Tremaine, then, told you that her mother is with her?"

"Yes; her mother, as she calls her, but the lady must be her stepmother. My wife's sister (you remember I told you) died many years ago."

"So it was supposed. But now, my dear friend," continued the speaker, seeing that Mr. Fitzallen was becoming violently agitated, "do be composed. If you are so much affected, how will Mrs. Fitzallen bear it?"

"What is it? you have not told me," said the rector, in a trembling voice; "can it be possible that we have been deceived—that Adela—that Mrs. Tremaine—is still—is——"

"Alive!" said Mr. Markham, finishing the sentence, at the same time taking hold of his friend's hand. "Yes, alive, and that is all. She has come to die in her sister's home."

Mr. Fitzallen uttered not a word, but seating himself upon the sofa again he leaned back, and, covering his face with his handkerchief, endeavoured to conceal the tears which he could not restrain.

"Do not think me weak, my good friend," said he at length; "but how can I forbear sympathising with my wife? Rhoda! Rhoda!" and again he rose and paced the floor. "How must this news be broken to you?"

"How, indeed," replied the doctor, "if you have no more command over your feelings than this? You must, however, forget yourself and your wife, and think only of the poor thing upstairs. I assure you she requires all our attention."

"Yes, yes," and as the rector spoke he endeavoured to compose himself; "if she is indeed Adela, all else will sink into insignificance but her comfort. But tell me, how was it that Captain Tremaine wrote stating that his wife was dead?"

"I know nothing, excepting that Mrs. Tremaine, her daughter, and servant are here, that they have been living for a dozen years in America, and that Captain Tremaine has been dead two years. There, now, you have all the information I can give you on the subject."

The rector was again silent for a few minutes, he was still thinking of his beloved wife. Well acquainted with her every thought and feeling, he knew how long and how sincerely she had mourned the fate of her unhappy sister; how fervently each day, until she received the fatal letter telling of Adela's death, she had prayed that the wanderer might return to England and be again united, if but for a short time, to the companion of her childhood and youth.

"Her prayer," said he aloud, "is answered; but I beg your pardon, doctor, your time is of

value; now I am collected," and Mr. Fitzallen sat down and endeavoured to look composed. "What was it you wished to consult me about?"

"As to whether Mrs. Tremaine should first see her sister here or at Lyth."

"Let the meeting take place at the rectory by all means," replied Mr. Fitzallen decidedly, "if she is so ill. When may we remove her from this place, as she cannot have the necessary comforts for an invalid at an inn?"

"We shall be better able to judge after she has seen you. If, after her introduction to you, she appears tolerably composed, I shall be an advocate for her removal to Lyth this afternoon."

For half an hour did the gentlemen converse alone; and then Mr. Markham left the rector, in order that he might go and prepare his patient for the interview with her brother-in-law. He found that she was already aware that Mr. Fitzallen was in the house, and, with an expression of gratitude on her countenance, she pressed the kind surgeon's hand.

"Now," said she, "I feel that I must soon see my sister; her husband is here, and I will not part with him till I have seen her. If you will not take me to her, she will come in search of her husband, and then we *must* meet."

A faint smile played round the speaker's mouth.

"Come, come," said the doctor, "you will do ; eh, ready for another game at hide and seek, are you? Well, it is not your turn to hide again yet. Now, let me feel your pulse. Very good," continued he, after laying down the small, white hand. "Now, tell me, Mrs. Tremaine, would you rather see Mr. Fitzallen upstairs, or let him wait till you can join him in the parlour?"

Mrs. Tremaine preferred meeting her brother-in-law downstairs; so Mr. Markham returned to the rector, and, sitting down with him, entered again into conversation.

In less time than they had supposed it possible for Mrs. Tremaine to have performed her toilet, Haidée informed Mr. Markham that her mistress was ready. He immediately went upstairs to fetch her, and in two or three minutes, with feeble trembling step, the pale and emaciated invalid entered the room. With open arms did the rector receive her. Not more thankful if she had been his own and only sister could Mr. Fitzallen have felt that he had a comfortable home so near to offer to her and her child.

For an hour afterwards, Mrs. Tremaine lay upon the sofa. Her hand rested on that of Mr. Fitzallen, and she seemed afraid of losing sight of him, even for an instant. She was so composed and cheerful, that Mr. Markham entertained a hope

that she would be able to leave Chilston in an hour or two. This hope, however, died away when the invalid began to complain of violent pain in her head. A cooling lotion was applied, which in a measure eased the pain, but a syncope followed, which caused considerable uneasiness to her anxious friends.

As the day wore on, it became more and more apparent that she must have another night's rest before being called upon to go through any more excitement or fatigue; and Mr. Fitzallen began to grow wishful to return home, as he was sure his wife would be expecting him. The moment, however, he proposed bidding his newly-found relative good-bye until the following morning, Mrs. Tremaine seized hold of his hand, saying—

“No, no! you must not leave me—say you will not go, or, indeed, I will prepare to accompany you.”

Mr. Fitzallen looked at Mr. Markham, as if seeking his advice.

“Mrs. Tremaine is right,” said the doctor; “you must stay here all night; do not trouble yourself; I will write a note to your wife, which you can copy. I will take care that the information it contains is as *satisfactory* as the one you received this morning.”

So saying he commenced writing. Half an

hour afterwards, he was standing in the bar with a letter directed to Mrs. Fitzallen in his hand, waiting till an overgrown, stupid-looking lad had washed his face.

"Now, Jack," said he, when the boy presented himself, "you are to take this note to the Rectory of Lyth ; and if you do as I bid you, I will give you half-a-crown."

The boy grasped the letter, and, giving the front lock of his hair an energetic pull, was about to start on his errand, when the doctor took hold of his jacket, saying—

"Stop, stop ! not so quick. I wish to ask a question. Do you know the names of the strangers in the house, or who they are ?

The answer was in the negative, excepting that one was a "nigger."

"That is well," thought the doctor. "Mrs. Fitzallen, if she hears a woman of colour is here, will never suppose it is her sister. Then, hark you," said he, addressing the boy, "if you wish to put the half-crown into your pocket, ask no questions, and answer none." And the doctor, fully persuaded that the messenger could betray nothing, let him go.

How the boy fulfilled his mission is already known. He had little to tell, but that little strengthened in the bosom of Mrs. Fitzallen a

hope that the invalid friend might prove to be the child of her much-lamented sister.

To return to Lyth. Herbert, as soon as he had seen his friend Mr. Middleton depart, hurried into the house, and, full of anxiety about his mother, went straight to her room. He was pleased to find the object of his solicitude more composed, and was carrying on an animated conversation with Amy and Conny. Herbert seated himself near the group, and soon found that his mother encouraged rather than otherwise questions relating to herself, and all those connected with her earlier days.

"But, mamma," was the first remark Herbert heard (Amy was speaking), "nothing could excuse Aunt Adela acting as she did."

"Poor Adela was indeed greatly to blame," replied Mrs. Fitzallen, sighing deeply, "and her conduct was surprising, for she had been so carefully trained in habits of the strictest rectitude. She had never been known before to even prevaricate, and possessed the finest sense of honour. I have never wavered in my conviction that the meeting between her and the Tremaines at Nevers was wholly unpremeditated on her part. Suddenly she was tempted, but that was her hour of trial on which hung her future happiness or misery in this life. We shall never know how far she struggled with the tempter; but we are sure

there was no prayer for aid from above, or strength would have been given her to conquer. It was a terrible fall ; and she who had before been looked upon by her new friends in France as a model of propriety, modesty, and every feminine grace, was afterwards regarded by them only as insincere, ungrateful, and designing. I read all in the countenances of those who had once been the warmest admirers of my darling sister. I know they misjudged her, and that she was still lovable as she ever had been. Cleremont would have become intolerable to me had it not been for the interest I felt in my poor friends the peasants. I was truly thankful when Madame de Richelet proposed our removal to England for the winter."

"But you have been to Cleremont since you were married, have you not?" asked Herbert.

"Yes ; your father and I spent a month there, twelve years ago, when you were all at Bath. We enjoyed our visit very much, for many changes had taken place. The young people your aunt knew there were almost all married or scattered abroad, and she who for a brief month or two had been such a bright star in the neighbourhood was all but forgotten. Her name was never once mentioned in my presence, but by your father and Madame de Richelet. The dear old lady was very well and cheerful, but found it very difficult, owing

to a weakness in her limbs, to move about. Her nephew, Henri, was a fine youth, and a great comfort to her. Madame Pascal had left the neighbourhood a year before our visit. The intimacy between her and Madame de Richelet was, I believe, resumed upon the return of the latter from England, but as if by tacit consent no allusion was ever made by either of them to the unfortunate tour. Madame Pascal probably knew that Madame de Richelet would not allow her to remain in ignorance if any tidings of importance reached her relating to your aunt. Before we left Cleremont Madame promised to pay us a long visit, the first summer she felt equal to the journey. We have not seen her since we were her guests, and now, I am afraid, she must be too infirm to bear any great fatigue. You are aware that she is nearly blind."

"And what became of Captain Levison?" asked Amy.

"I saw his marriage in the paper about a year after I became Mrs. Fitzallen. His wife was the daughter of a judge in India. I know nothing more of him."

"And Mrs. Hastwell, what became of her?"

"She died a short time since, I accidentally heard, having lived for several years upon the charity of her friends. I corresponded with Mrs.

Digby a few years after my marriage. She then still grieved sadly for the loss of her husband, but I have long lost sight of even her."

"I wonder," said Conny, "if Drusch Castle is still there. Should I ever go to Brussels, I shall certainly make an excursion to the famous ruins, and see whether the two towers are still standing."

"They were," said Mrs. Fitzallen, "when Mrs. Digby last wrote to me. She and Major and Mrs. Treversham had just returned from a tour on the Continent. They had been to Brussels, and had made an excursion to Drusch Castle. Mrs. Digby said that 'my tower,' as she called the one I took refuge in during the thunderstorm, was fast crumbling away, and the other tower was in little better condition, . . . but I can easily find the letter. Herbert, bring me that small, black tin box, which stands on the shelf in the dressing-room."

"Oh, thanks, mamma," said Conny, her eyes sparkling. "Shall we at last have a peep into that wonderful box?"

"Many treasures are there, dear," replied the mother, smiling faintly. The box was brought. Mrs. Fitzallen unlocked it, and raised the lid.

"Only letters!" exclaimed the disappointed Conny.

"Have a little patience," said her mother, at the

same time selecting a letter from the uppermost packet, and opening it. "There is one passage here which pleased me much, it is this: 'We were all standing in a meditative mood gazing upon the ruins, and thinking of that happy day we spent there, when we were suddenly startled by the sound of something falling heavily to the ground. It was a large piece of sculptured marble, which had evidently formed the capital of a buttress. For a moment it rested upon the edge of the precipice, then rolled over. In its descent it struck, and broke off a projecting ledge of rock, and the smooth polished marble, and the rough stone, fell together into the abyss, there to remain till time shall be no more !

" 'Could you not imagine,' said Major Treversham, 'that piece of marble resembling the lords who once owned this castle, polished, refined, and placed on high as they were above their fellow-mortals, and permitted, even while descending to the tomb, to crush and drive their humbler brethren before them. Where is the difference now? who could in the dark tomb distinguish between the baron and the serf? Which of the powerful nobles, who successively reigned in this castle ages ago, could, any more than the marble which now lies with its rude companion at the bottom of that blue and stagnant pool, say to the

vassal who sleeps near, Begone, I rest not with such as thou?"

"What a pity," said Herbert, when Mrs. Fitzallen had returned the letter to its place, "that you lost sight of such a correspondent. Do you not know at all what became of Mrs. Digby?"

"I do not. She never remained long in one place, travelling about generally with Major and Mrs. Treversham, who had no settled home. I unfortunately mislaid her last letter, and when some weeks afterwards I found it, I did not know where to address a reply, and so our correspondence ended.

"My letters to her, I fear, were not very interesting after my marriage, for I had little to tell her, but of my own happiness and my home treasures. Your aunt's name was never mentioned between us, after it had ceased to be Adela Elliott. Mrs. Digby heard of the elopement from others, and as I made no allusion to the unhappy affair in my letters, delicacy forbade her doing so in hers. You must remember that I was only acquainted with Mrs. Digby a few weeks before her irreparable loss, and have not met her since. After the death of her father, Major Montague, she resided chiefly with the Trevershams, over whom a great change had taken place. The sudden death at Waterloo of several of their friends, young officers,

who had been among the gayest at the Duchess of Richmond's ball, made a deep impression upon them. They resolved, with God's help, to begin a new life. Grace was given them to persevere in the right path, and Mrs. Digby frequently mentioned them in terms of the warmest admiration. She regarded Mrs. Treversham as a sister sent to comfort her.

"And to think that Mrs. Jones is Mary, and her husband was Frank," mused Amy half aloud.

"What a wonderful discovery!" said Herbert, "considering mother always calls her Mary, and Mrs. Jones often alludes to her dear Frank. Only the other day, she said it would not be long now before she joined him in heaven."

"Have you seen her since you read the manuscript?" asked Mrs. Fitzallen.

"Oh yes," replied Conny with animation; "we all went in a body to her sitting-room this morning, and told her she had no secrets to keep from us now, for we knew all. I could not help putting my arms round her, and giving her a kiss, the dear, good creature. We will call her room 'Mary's boudoir.'"

"No, no," said Herbert, "that will not do," for he saw an expression of pain pass over his mother's face. The latter began hurriedly to take packets of letters out of the tin box. Conny was again

all curiosity. A small morocco case attracted her attention.

"Oh, there is your miniature, mamma! I thought papa always kept that?"

Without replying, Mrs. Fitzallen took out the case, opened it, and, after gazing for a few seconds upon the portrait it contained, handed it to her children.

"Oh, what a lovely face!" exclaimed Herbert. "This is Aunt Adela." He suddenly paused, and looked first at Amy, and then at the portrait. Amy was leaning over his shoulder, she accidentally raised her eyes, and saw her own face and figure reflected in a robing-glass, which stood opposite to her. Suddenly her face flushed, for the likeness between herself and her Aunt Adela, struck her forcibly. She threw her arms around her mother's neck, and kissed her fondly, saying—

"I know it all now, mamma."

"What, Amy?" asked Mrs. Fitzallen, in a quivering voice.

"Oh — why — why — you so often"—— Poor Amy became confused, and could not proceed, for did it not seem like foolish vanity comparing herself to that lovely portrait. Herbert helped her out of her difficulty.

"She would say, mother, that she knows now why she is, if possible, dearer to you than the rest

of us. And no wonder, if this painting was a faithful likeness of Aunt Adela."

"It was," replied Mrs. Fitzallen. "The portrait of me, which you have frequently seen, and declared must have been a speaking likeness, and this, were painted by the same artist for your grandfather, before he went abroad, leaving your aunt, Madame de Richelet, and myself to follow him. On that sad evening at Brussels, the last we spent with him, he, after your aunt and I had bidden him good night, placed both cases in Madame de Richelet's hands, desiring her to give them us, should he not return alive. Madame told us that he gave each portrait a long, last look; and then, heaving a deep sigh, closed the cases, and handed them to her."

Herbert especially seemed as though he would never weary in his examination of the beautiful painting executed on ivory.

"Aunt Adela must have been very lovely," he mused unconsciously, half aloud, as he gazed upon the delicately-formed oval face, with its chiselled features, the sweet, pensive mouth, the dark-blue eyes, and the pure calm brow, from which the bright hair fell in waves of shining gold. The attention of Herbert and his sisters was at length diverted from the portrait to several small articles which Mrs. Fitzallen was taking out of the box.

"These all," said she, "belonged to your Aunt

Adela. I have carefully preserved them, never having ceased to hope that I may yet see a daughter or a son of my darling sister."

"Do you think it possible that the invalid at Chilston may be either one or the other?" asked Herbert cautiously.

"Have you any reason for supposing it possible?" returned Mrs. Fitzallen, looking eagerly at her son.

"None but what you are aware of. Travellers intending to take us by surprise, and make the rectory their home for a time at least, have been unexpectedly detained at Chilston. A mysterious note is sent to my father, urging him to hasten to Chilston without delay. Because he could not return home last evening, he sends you a note so carefully worded that you do not know even the sex of the invalid. Why all this mystery, if the strangers are relations of my father? The invalid cannot be Madame de Richelet. It would be absurd to suppose that she would come upon us in this sudden way, and even if she had, without letting us know her plans, undertaken such a journey, and had broken down when so near its end, she would have sent for you, not for my father, or at least for both of you."

"Then I am not alone in my supposition," said

Mrs. Fitzallen excitedly. "I may yet embrace a child of my darling sister!"

"O mamma!" exclaimed Amy alarmed, "do not raise your hopes too high. Suppose the invalid is only Captain Tremaine, come to ask your forgiveness."

"Before he dies," chimed in Conny, as though she were reading a touching narrative.

"It may be so," returned Mrs. Fitzallen thoughtfully. "Should your father, Herbert, not be here before luncheon, you shall drive me this afternoon to Chilston. I would rather be spared the pain of seeing Captain Tremaine, but there are many particulars of my sister's death I must, if possible, hear before it be too late. Yes, it very probably is Captain Tremaine, and perhaps" (Mrs. Fitzallen became again agitated) "he may have brought his daughter, that she may find a home with us. He knows how I should love her for her mother's sake. There were only two travellers the boy said last evening, besides the negro servant. Yes; they will be Captain Tremaine and Frederica. That was the name of Adela's girl."

Mrs. Fitzallen was musing aloud. A wearied look stole over her countenance. "I think I could sleep a little if I were alone," she said. "Have you any more questions you wish to ask?"

"Only one," replied Amy; "why have you so

studiously kept us in ignorance of so many interesting events of your life?"

"I was in such grief for long after I had heard of my sister's death, that for months her name was never mentioned in my presence. Even you, Amy, were too young to understand the nature of my loss. When time had subdued my sorrow, I still shrank from any conversation relating to my loved one, feeling that I could not tell you her sad history, and gloss over her weakness in having yielded to the persuasions of Mrs. Tremaine and the Captain, knowing that the step she was taking would bring such heavy sorrow upon those who truly loved her; and not only so, but she was uniting herself with one whose religious principles, she must have known, were at the best of a very doubtful character. The forgiveness of Madame de Richelet and myself, she was never allowed to ask. But no human power could restrain her from seeking the pardon of Him she had so grievously sinned against. And that my poor sister did repent, and with many contrite tears acknowledge her fault, I doubt not, for Adela could not live without the peace of her Saviour. The love of the most devoted husband could not compensate for the loss of that."

"Should the travellers at Chilston be the Tremaines," remarked Herbert after a pause, "will it

not be a singular coincidence, their arrival and our having only just now become acquainted with Aunt Adela's history? We knew you had a sister, but always supposed she died unmarried very soon after our grandfather fell at Waterloo; and as you invariably seemed distressed if we made the slightest allusion to her, we refrained from asking any questions about her."

"It would," returned Mrs. Fitzallen, "have been a very singular coincidence, but the fact is, when the note came yesterday morning summoning your father to Chilston to meet strangers who were on their way here, my thoughts at once fled to India, and to your Aunt Adela's child or children. As I pondered over the possibility of the two travellers being Tremaines, I much regretted that I had not allowed you to read your father's manuscript, which would have explained all that would be painful for me to relate, and which I should certainly have to do before you met a child of my poor sister. I was therefore very glad that the long, wet afternoon gave you an opportunity of becoming acquainted with all the circumstances connected with your aunt's unhappy marriage. I have never read the manuscript, and did not even know where your father kept it until about a fortnight ago, when he told me where it

was, and said he intended to let you have it when Mr. Middleton's visit was over."

"Why did not papa wish you to see it?" asked Conny.

The mother smiled as she replied, "I strongly suspect he has spoken of me in higher terms than I should approve of, and felt sure that if I read it, I should draw my pen through many passages which had been dictated by love, always partial."

"But we should have read the passages notwithstanding, and taken no notice of your correcting lines, for we are quite old enough"—and Conny as she spoke put on a very decided air—"to know that papa wrote only the truth, and nothing but the truth."

Mrs. Fitzallen drew her child to her, and kissed her fondly, and then said, "Now let me rest a little, and then I shall be better prepared for any surprise in store for me."

Mrs. Fitzallen closed her eyes, her three children each pressed a loving kiss on her brow, and then left her.

About three hours afterwards, Amy, Herbert, Conny, and Adelaide Moir, were seated in the verandah. The Fitzallens were telling their visitor all that had passed in their mother's room. Their Aunt Adela's portrait was being described, when they were startled by seeing Alfred running to-

wards them at full speed. He was pale and agitated. Herbert at once hastened to meet him, but before leaving the verandah he told the girls to remain where they were, for Alfred had beckoned to him, at the same time turning into the shrubbery, and Herbert understood that his brother wished to speak to him alone. As soon as they were out of sight of the house, Alfred leaned against a tree and burst into tears.

"Alfred, Alfred!" exclaimed Herbert, in great alarm; "what is the matter? you have over-fatigued yourself."

"No, no," and Alfred shook himself, as though to throw off a weakness he was ashamed of; "I am in such a flutter, I scarcely know what I am saying or doing. I came on Cox, and left him, poor animal, at the gate, hot and tired enough, for he has cantered almost all the way from Chilston. But oh! Herbert, I have brought such news. Papa says you must break it to our mother."

"What news?" asked Herbert hurriedly; "is this stranger indeed our cousin?"

"Yes, but that is nothing; the invalid traveller is mamma's sister Adela—Mrs. Tremaine—Aunt Adela—who ran away with Captain Tremaine and died in India many years ago, at least so mamma thought."

"Alfred!" said Herbert, grasping his brother's

hand, and looking steadily at him ; “are you not labouring under some delusion?”

“Delusion ! no ; I have seen her ; and she kissed me over and over again, and called me Rhoda’s child. But she is dying, Herbert. Papa intended to have come himself on Cox ; but Adela, Aunt Adela I should say, would not let him leave her an instant, and said he must ride with her in the carriage ; so he told me to mount Cox and make as much haste home as possible, that mamma might be prepared for the meeting. I told him that I thought mamma might imagine I had made some mistake ; so he went into the inn and wrote a note, and told me to give it you, and you are to give it to our mother after you have told her who the strangers are. Here, take it, and lose no time, for I heard the mulattress tell the post-boy to urge the horses on at full speed.”

Herbert, scarcely conscious of what he was doing, took the note and returned to the house. He found Mrs. Fitzallen standing in the verandah. Both she and his sisters were much agitated.

“Who is this stranger, Herbert ? Has Alfred seen her ?” asked Mrs. Fitzallen.

“You are right, mother dear, in your conjecture.” And Herbert, as he spoke, led her by the hand into the drawing-room.

“What conjecture ? Did you understand me—

did I tell you that I thought one of the travellers might be Adela's child ? ”

“ Yes ; you did tell me that you could not shake off the impression that your niece was at Chilston. You have not indulged a false hope. Your sister's child will soon be here,” continued Herbert, becoming violently agitated. “ Alfred has seen her. Sit down ; do be calm, try to listen with composure to what I have to tell you.”

Mrs. Fitzallen looked with some surprise at her son.

“ Why do you tremble so, Herbert ? ” said she. “ Is my niece very ill ? Do not be alarmed about me. Thankful, indeed, am I that I shall be permitted to prove by the love that I bear for her child, how fondly is the memory of my dear sister treasured in my heart. What you have told me seems scarcely news, so completely had the idea taken possession of my mind, that one of the travellers is my niece. Nothing would have prevented me setting off to Chilston this morning before breakfast, had I not reflected that your father must have some particular reason for not wishing me to go, and yet I resolved not to be detained from my sister's child much longer.”

Mrs. Fitzallen endeavoured to assume a calm tone, that Herbert might become more assured ; but, to her astonishment, his agitation increased

rather than otherwise. Becoming alarmed, she said—

“Herbert, what is the matter? Your father, is he ill? Why has Alfred returned on Cox, instead of your father? Tell me at once, do not let me be detained here. I will go to him.”

“No, no! my father is well; it is for you I fear. Oh! mother dear, did you ever for a moment doubt the truth of Captain Tremaine’s statement, when he sent word that his wife was dead?”

“What do you mean?” exclaimed Mrs. Fitzallen, starting to her feet.

Herbert answered her not, and for a minute his mother stood with her eyes fixed upon him, then raising her hand to her forehead, she said—

“Am I dreaming? Amy, my child, come to me.”

“I am here, mamma,” said Amy, taking hold of her mother’s hand, and kissing her affectionately. “You are not dreaming. Herbert has indeed some strange news to tell you; and see, he dare not speak, lest your agitation should overpower you.”

“Go on, Herbert,” said Mrs. Fitzallen, “I will be calm. Hide nothing from me;” and as she spoke, she pressed her daughter’s hand with such force, that Amy had well-nigh uttered a cry of pain.

"Alfred," replied Herbert, "has just told me that one of these travellers is our cousin Frederica, and the other, who is in a dying state, is—is her mother—yes, her mother, your sister, Aunt Adela. She would not let my father leave her, so he sent Alfred on before, and they will be all here shortly."

"It cannot be!" said Mrs. Fitzallen; "Alfred has made some great mistake."

"Indeed, he has not. He says, that the elder lady kissed him over and over again, and called him her sister's child; and here is a note from my father, confirming all that I have told you."

Mrs. Fitzallen eagerly took the note, and, tearing it open, read as follows:—

"MY BELOVED WIFE,—Herbert or Amy will, I trust, before you read this, have broken to you, as gently as possible, the almost incredible news that your poor sister, so long mourned for as dead, is still living. You will soon see her, but be not overcome with joy, for Adela is a hopeless invalid, and has but, I fear, arrived to bid you farewell for ever in this world. She has been a widow two years, and has one child, a lovely girl, who has never since her birth been separated from her mother for a day. They have just arrived from America. Why you were not sent for to Chilston,

must be explained when we meet. Of Adela's history, I know no more than I have told you. Struggle, my dear wife, against excessive emotion; for the sake of your sister, control your feelings as much as possible. Mr. Markham, whom you may expect with us, says, that the utmost caution will be necessary, if the poor invalid is to be prevented from sinking, after the excitement produced by her first interview with you. Praying that God will strengthen and support you, I am, my dearest,—
Your affectionate husband,

“CHARLES FITZALLEN.”

Paler and paler grew Mrs. Fitzallen's cheeks as she read her husband's note; Herbert and Amy watched her countenance with much anxiety. What her feelings were, she herself perhaps could not have told, for she was almost stupified with amazement. She only knew that she wished to be alone, and begged her companions to leave her. They looked at each other, as though doubtful whether or not it would be prudent to comply with her request. Herbert was the first to obey her.

“Come, Amy, Adelaide, and Conny,” he said; “mother will be better by herself.”

The four went into the breakfast-room. In ten

minutes afterwards Amy stepped into the verandah, and then walked cautiously past the drawing-room windows, looking into the room as she did so. When she returned to the breakfast-room her tears were falling. "Mamma," said she, "is kneeling on the ground near the sofa, her face is buried in her hands. She is crying, for I heard two or three sobs."

"That is well," remarked Herbert; "we need not fear for her now."

Half an hour passed slowly away, then was heard the sound of carriage-wheels.

"They are coming!" exclaimed Herbert. "Yes; there is the mulattress in the rumble. Mother must be told."

"I will go home," said Adelaide, who was trembling like an aspen leaf.

"No! no!" replied Amy; "stay with me, indeed I feel as though I should faint."

Herbert hastened to his mother. He found her standing like a marble statue in the middle of the drawing-room; she had heard the carriage-wheels, she knew the travellers had arrived, but she could not move, neither could she speak. A few minutes more, and Mrs. Tremaine, supported by Mr. Fitzallen and Mr. Markham, had entered the house. She was at once conducted to the drawing-room,

at the door of which she stood as if suddenly transfixed. For a second or two the sisters gazed upon each other, then a cry of recognition rang through the room, and the next moment they were clasped in each other's arms.

CHAPTER VIII.



THANK you, sister, that is very comfortable ; no one arranges my pillows as you do. How delightful the air is, so soft and yet so refreshing ! I almost think I shall deceive the doctors, I feel so much stronger already. I have lost that sinking, dying sensation, which made me fear that I should not live to reach Lyth."

Such were the remarks of Mrs Tremaine one lovely afternoon, a few days after her arrival at Lyth. Mr. Parkinson, whose patient she now was, had allowed her for the first time to be taken on to the lawn in front of the sea, where a couch had been placed for her to recline upon.

"I am indeed thankful you feel better, dear Adela," said Mrs. Fitzallen ; but though she spoke cheerfully her countenance was sad, for she knew that the invalid's present relief from exhaustion and suffering was but temporary, and that no per-

manent change for the better could be hoped for. After a short pause she said, "Tell me, love, would you wish to remain among us?"

"I am ready either to stay or to go; I have suffered so much during the last several years, that my only consolation has been the thought that there is a home above in which I must, sooner or later, find the rest denied me on earth. Only one thing did I desire to live for, that was to watch over my dear child; but when I had once resolved to bring her to you, I prayed that God would give me strength to accomplish my journey; and then, sister, I thought that my only prayer would be that He would take me to Himself; but how can I wish to leave you now? When you folded me to your bosom, I felt as though I had found a place of rest for my poor weary head. And your home, it seems to me a perfect paradise. Home! home! Never since I left dear Madame's château for that fatal tour have I known till now the comforts and the delights of *home*."

"But you were happy, were you not, for two or three years after you became Mrs. Tremaine?"

"Happy! no. Pleasures I had; but peace was my lot after my marriage. I knew when I myself to Captain Tremaine that I should rest until you and Madame and my husband conciled to each other. This I believed

would be soon and easily effected, when Frederick was my husband. Alas ! I quickly discovered that he was far from wishing a further acquaintance with either of you. This was a constant source of grief to me. True, in my letters to you, I spoke only of happiness, for my husband dictated every line I wrote. Little time, indeed, I had for reflection, for Captain Tremaine loved excitement, and he was, I know, proud of me. I blindly mistook the delight he could not conceal, when he saw me courted and admired, as a proof of his deep affection for me ; and I did love him—love him with as true a heart as ever beat in woman's breast ; but I loved him for virtues I believed he possessed. By degrees I had to learn that these virtues existed but in my own imagination. Had I been trained only for this world, I could have been satisfied ; but my heart sank within me when I found that the companion I had chosen for life was wholly devoid of religious principle. I was very wretched, and had it not been for Divine support I should have been heart-broken. It was not long, you may be sure, dear Rhoda, after my marriage that I awoke to a consciousness of my sin. With tears of penitence I besought my Saviour to take me again in His arms, that I might again rest on His bosom and lay all my cares upon Him. Peace was vouchsafed to me. From the hour I felt I was

forgiven I failed not to mingle in my prayers petitions for the conversion of my husband. After many sad years the longing of my heart was satisfied. I have never forgotten the feeling of alarm which took possession of me when, a few days after my marriage, I sat down to write my first letter as Adela Tremaine. I found I was only permitted to say what my husband and his mother dictated. Oh, how I longed to entreat the forgiveness not only of Madame de Richelet and you, but also of Madame Pascal! and to tell you that my meeting with Frederick and Mrs Tremaine at Nevers was wholly unpremeditated on my part; that I had no idea they were in the town until I met Mrs. Tremaine on the landing of the hotel after, angry and excited, I had left the room in which Madame Pascal was resting. But I might not tell you this, and you would all, I know, be under the impression that the meeting was pre-arranged, and that I was a party to it. All had, indeed, been planned, but only by Frederick and his mother."

The speaker covered her face with her hands.

"Never for one moment, dear Adela," said Mrs. Fitzallen warmly, "did Madame de Richelet or I believe that when you left Geneva you had any hope of seeing Captain Tremaine again till he came to Cleremont to plead his cause; but I must insist upon silence now."

For half an hour Mrs. Tremaine lay as though she were asleep, then she opened her eyes and, looking inquiringly at her sister, said—

“I only received two letters from you after our arrival at Calcutta.”

“Only two!” exclaimed Mrs. Fitzallen; “how was that? I wrote by almost every mail for two years.”

An expression of pain passed over Mrs. Tremaine's countenance.

Then she said, oh how sadly, “He must have destroyed your letters, and he persuaded me that you and Madame de Richelet had never really forgiven me, and that you evidently wished to forget me. Six letters to you were sent from India, at least were consigned by me to the care of Frederick, he promising to see them safely posted.”

“I only received one; the first, I suppose,” returned Mrs. Fitzallen, with deep emotion.

Mrs. Tremaine continued, “If he intercepted my letters, I am not surprised to hear that he did yours. I was almost driven to despair; my only earthly comfort was my child. I dare not attempt to describe the dreadful life I led in Calcutta. Sometimes I never saw Frederick for days together. Almost the whole of each night I waited up for him, longing, yet dreading to hear his footsteps,

knowing in what condition he would probably return home."

Mrs. Tremaine's voice here suddenly failed, and she was unable to proceed with her narrative. It was a week at least before Mrs. Fitzallen became fully acquainted with her sister's sad history. Occasionally Mrs. Tremaine would herself be the narrator. Frederica as opportunity occurred, would tell her aunt an affecting incident or two, and not unfrequently Mrs. Jones would repeat to her mistress narratives she had heard from Haidée.

We conclude the sad history in our own words :—

One day Captain Tremaine rushed suddenly into the bungalow, and told his poor wife that she must flee with him at once, for he believed he had in a duel mortally wounded a brother officer. In the greatest terror Mrs. Tremaine, aided by her child's ayah, collected the few valuables she possessed, and in an hour had bidden farewell to her home in Calcutta. The fugitive party consisted of Captain and Mrs. Tremaine, the little Frederica and her ayah, and Haidée the daughter of the ayah, who was a widow. Captain Tremaine was so fearful of being detected that he would not allow his wearied companions, with their helpless children, to remain above a day or two in one place. Now it was more than ever that the almost

heart-broken wife felt the priceless worth of Him on Whom alone she could trust. Humbled and penitent, her confidence in her husband gone, forgotten as she believed herself to be by her sister and Madame de Richelet, where indeed could she find comfort on earth? Fain would she have drawn her husband to the Fountain of healing waters. He was deaf to all her entreaties; and, doubting not that the emissaries of the law were in pursuit of him, wandered like the conscience-stricken Cain, from place to place, fleeing from the face of man.

Time and space will not permit us to follow Mrs. Tremaine in all her wanderings. At length, she with her husband, a baby boy, two months old, Reginald, and her daughter, with her faithful servant and the little Haidée, were settled in Canada. For the next few years, Mrs. Tremaine enjoyed comparative comfort; her husband finding it indispensable that he should exert himself, his funds being almost exhausted, turned his attention to farming, and with more success than could have been anticipated. Thrown entirely upon his own resources, and pleased with the novelty of his new employment, he began to show an interest in his home, which awoke in the breast of his poor wife a hope that a change was indeed coming over him. Intelligence reached him that the officer he had

wounded had quite recovered. This was, as may be supposed, a great relief. He became less irritable, though, as a rule, displaying the greatest impatience at the failure of any favourite project. His heart was not touched, and when desponding and anxious, he still turned a deaf ear to the religious consolation his loving wife would fain have had him share with her. Time rolled on, and the exiles prospered in their isolated home, and tract after tract was added to their once small farm. Reginald Tremaine, now eight years of age, was the delight of his parents, his father seemed wrapped up in him, and looked forward with pride to the day when his son would accompany him on his business tours, to the neighbouring towns. Alas ! he was leaning upon a broken reed, fever entered his dwelling, and Reginald was its first victim. This was a dreadful blow to the parents. The mother was resigned and patient, but the father was frantic, and for a time reason seemed to totter on her throne. The faithful mulattress was likewise stricken down, and died, leaving her orphan daughter Haidée to the care of her beloved mistress.

After the death of his son, Captain Tremaine grew more and more reserved and melancholy ; and his wife, though preferring to remain near the grave of her child, recommended him to seek some other settlement, thinking that change of scene

would tend to raise his spirits. He followed her advice, and finally fixed upon what appeared to him a desirable spot near the banks of the St. Lawrence. Here he soon became more cheerful, and commenced farming again in good earnest. All his labour was, however, lost. The soil and the climate were unfavourable, and it was soon evident that it was a waste of time to remain there. To the surprise of Mrs. Tremaine he bore this disappointment with more calmness than he had before displayed when anything crossed his wishes; and, contrary to his usual custom, he consulted her about their next movements. He was tired of farming, and began to long for the society of men. His wife having been one day seriously alarmed whilst alone in the house by a party of Indians, who very unceremoniously entered the dwelling and helped themselves to whatever took their fancy, had no objection to his seeking a home less desolate than their present one. She hoped also that, if they resided in a town, she might, perhaps, meet with some one who knew her sister; and, although she had no intention of betraying who she was, she might at least hear whether Mrs. Fitzallen were still living. She had quite given up all hope of ever seeing her friends again, and for years she had not mentioned their names to her husband. The last time she had

done so, he had poured forth such a torrent of abuse upon their heads, for what he called their heartless neglect of her, that she resolved never again to speak of them in his presence. Little did she think how her sister and Madame de Richelet had mourned for her as dead.

The exiles moved northward, and in the course of a day or two reached the town of Tadousac. Captain Tremaine, under the name of Brown, entered at once into the fur-trade.

It was about three months after he had settled at Tadousac that business called him to New Brunswick. For two reasons Mrs. Tremaine dreaded him taking this journey. One was that she feared the Indians, whom her husband expected to meet in New Brunswick, as he was going thither to barter cloth for skins. She had no confidence in these natives, and was at all times uneasy when she knew that he was in their company. The other was because the passage across the Gulf of St. Lawrence, which is at that part nearly a hundred miles broad, is exceedingly dangerous in stormy weather, and the season was not a favourable one.

Hope had sprung up within her, not without foundation, that the heart of her husband was under divine influence ; her prayers in his behalf, she believed, were being answered, and she eagerly

looked forward to the time when he should become all she trusted he was, when she gave her first warm affections to him.

On the morning that he sailed for New Brunswick Mrs. Tremaine was seated in her little parlour, expecting him every moment to return from the docks to bid her farewell. Her heart was very heavy, and an indescribable feeling of fear had taken possession of her. Involuntarily she began to sing. Scarcely had the words, "Oh! that I had wings like a dove, then would I flee away and be at rest," passed her lips, than the door opened, and Captain Tremaine entered the room. Her limbs trembled as she rose from her seat and advanced to meet him. To her astonishment he put his arms around her and pressed her to his heart, saying—

"You shall, my gentle, faithful wife, have rest, if you can forgive a wretch who has for so long destroyed your peace. Adela! Adela! you know not what remorse I have endured of late. There is, however, no time now for confessions. If God spares me, I will tell you all upon my return. Much I have to reveal, which will make you shrink from me; but you shall know all—how I have deceived you and your sister. Think not that I am acting from sudden impulse. No; for months I have humbled myself before God. He took my child to save r

I looked upon death ; I laid my boy in the grave, and believed that I was parted from him for ever. I heard you and Frederica speak of meeting him in heaven, but you spoke only of yourselves, and I knew that I was shut out. I rushed into the woods, threw myself on the ground, and wept.

"They were the first tears I had shed for many years. The words, 'I will arise and go to my Father, and say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son,' occurred to my mind ; how often had you and I sung that verse together, but never till that day did I know the meaning of it. Before night I found it in your Bible. I read the parable—I was the prodigal son—I have returned to my Father."

"And His holy angels," said Mrs. Tremaine, "have welcomed you with songs of joy."

Never had the neglected, often almost broken-hearted, wife ceased to love the man who had promised to succour and defend her ; but now she felt as though earth contained nought that could be ever so dear to her as he on whose bosom she was leaning. She clung to him, and besought him not to leave her.

"Oh, dear Frederick !" said she, "let me taste one day's happiness. Is it not cruel to rob me of that which I have but just found ?"

“Nay, nay, Adela! I must go. I did not mean to have told you this now, but I could no longer hide it within my own breast. I was a coward before you, my true wife, and feared to tell you what I wretch I knew I was. I must not indeed be detained, for all is ready on board the ‘Toma-hawk.’ Adela, dear, why does your head droop? you have always had a brave heart till now.”

But he spoke to one who heard him not. Manfully had she for years struggled against sorrow and privations, but now excess of joy had overpowered her. Gently did Captain Tremaine lay his fainting wife upon the sofa. Soon she was restored to consciousness, and in ten minutes afterwards he was obliged to leave her.

Three days passed away, and Mrs. Tremaine began to look for her husband's return. On the fourth day of his absence, she stationed herself on a high rock near the fort, and for hours never left that spot; but she watched and waited in vain for the expected vessel. Disappointed and wearied she returned home in the evening. That night she could not sleep, though for the first hour or two there was no cause for uneasiness on her part.

The moon was at the full, the wind was at rest, and all was calm; but about midnight she heard a low whistling moan, which made her heart beat; then came slight gusts of wind, and she knew a

storm was fast rising. She dressed herself, but what could she do? She could only pray—pray for her husband, pray for herself.

The storm increased and raged till morning dawned. Then came the news that a ship was on the rocks. Mrs. Tremaine left the house, followed by Haidée ; the two women ran they scarcely knew whither, till they found themselves standing upon a high rock, known by the name of the “Death’s Head.” This rock was of a most peculiar form ; it was literally a slice of rock jutting out into the sea, and was so narrow at the top that two persons could not walk abreast upon it. Its sides were perpendicular, and at its base lay a cluster of small rocks. It derived its name from the fact that all vessels that were driven near to it were doomed to destruction. Neither could any help be afforded to their unhappy crews.

It was marvellous how Mrs. Tremaine and her servant could stand in such a storm upon this dizzy height ; but, providentially, the wind was comparatively calm during the few minutes they remained in their dangerous position. They had, unthinkingly, walked on to the Death’s Head, anxious only to have an extensive view of the sea. For a moment or two their eyes scanned the turbulent waters, and saw nothing but the roaring waves as they rolled heavily over each other.

Suddenly Haidée, who was standing before her mistress, felt the skirt of her dress pulled violently.

"Look! look there!" screamed Mrs. Tremaine, pointing to the rocks beneath them.

Haidée looked down. One half of a ship was lying more than a hundred yards below their feet. So firmly wedged was it between the rocks, that not even the furious sea, which dashed against it, could move it, though each wave carried away some loose part of the wreck. For a minute or two Haidée and her mistress gazed upon the sad spectacle; then the latter turned her face away.

Why does Haidée stand with dilated eyes, gazing with a fixed look of horror, upon a ledge of rock on the other side of the Death's Head? What is it that has been flung upon that narrow shelf? It is the body of a man, the face is upturned—it is that of her master.

Haidée, with wonderful presence of mind, commanded her feelings, and shrieked not. Placing her hands upon Mrs. Tremaine's shoulders, she, by main force, pushed her forward, and in another minute, she and her mistress were standing upon a broader and safer promontory. One more glance did Haidée give to that piece of rock, which seemed to have grown out of the side of the gigantic Death's Head, but it was untenanted,

the next wave having carried away the burden, which its predecessor had, as if in very scorn, flung aside.

"To the fort, Haidèe ! to the fort !" cried Mrs. Tremaine, with a face livid as that of the corpse the servant had seen a few minutes before. "We will go there, they know there what vessel has been lost."

"Stay, dear mistress, stay," said Haidèe, trying to detain her ; "let us go home, and send a messenger to the fort."

"Home !" screamed Mrs. Tremaine, fast losing all control over herself. "Go home before I know whether or not he is lying there !" and as she spoke she pointed to the fatal rocks below. "You are a child, Haidèe, not a wife, or you would not talk to me about going home." So saying, she, with almost supernatural strength, sprang across a small chasm, and ran rapidly towards the fort. Haidèe followed her ; but they had not gone far when they met a man. With breathless eagerness Mrs. Tremaine asked him what ship was on the rocks.

"The 'Victoria,'" was the reply, "with a hundred passengers on board, from Quebec."

"Then he may still be safe !" exclaimed Mrs. Tremaine, clasping her hands. One look of thankfulness she cast at Haidèe, then, seating herself on

a large stone, burst into tears. Momentary was her relief.

Haidée, forgetting for a minute the sorrows of her mistress in her horror at hearing what the man had said, asked him whether all on board the "Victoria" were lost.

"Not all," was the answer; "the ship struck exactly underneath the fort, and every man in Tadousac, but myself, is busy with ropes, rescuing those who are clinging to the rocks. I should be there now, but an old comrade says he saw the 'Tomahawk' from New Brunswick, an hour or two ago, being driven before the wind. She is gone, no one knows where, but he says she was making straight for the Death's Head, and I am going to see if there is a wreck there."

Mrs. Tremaine sprang to her feet. At this moment the man perceived a human body lying on a rock some fifty feet below where he stood. He moved quickly towards it, Mrs. Tremaine following him. Haidée would have prevented her doing so, but her limbs trembled, and refused to support her. She sank upon her knees, and covered her eyes with her hands, that she might not witness the first agonizing grief of the newly-made widow, for even at that distance, Haidée had recognised her master's corpse.

Suddenly a wild cry arose on the wind. Haidée's

strength returned to her—she arose from her knees, rushed down the rocks, and received from the hands of the stranger the inanimate form of her mistress.

That day Mrs. Tremaine received her death-blow. Little remains to be told. An alarming illness was the consequence of her exposure to the storm, and for a year after her husband's death Mrs. Tremaine remained at Tadousac, a confirmed invalid. Unspeakable had been her consolation to find from her husband's papers, all of which she had carefully examined, numerous proofs that the change in his heart had been gradual and sincere. His thoughts he had committed to paper, and more than one prayer of a penitent sinner she found, evidently of his own composition. In his diary there was often the resolution made to break through his reserve, and open his mind to his wife; but he let the opportunity pass, and to God alone did he confess his sins.

From Tadousac, Mrs. Tremaine removed to Quebec, in order that she might be under the care of a skilful physician there, Dr. Jefferson. He at once recommended her to return to her native country. For the sake of her child, she made preparations for the voyage. She knew herself that for her disease there was no cure, as Dr. Jefferson had told her it was incipient con-

sumption. How she accomplished her long journey and met her sister is already known, and truly then she seemed to think her toils were ended, for a calm happiness was her portion from the moment she felt her sister's arms around her.

CHAPTER IX.



T was on the third day after Mrs. Tremaine's arrival, that, as she lay in the drawing-room before the French window, the doors of which were open, her sister standing outside in the verandah arranging some favourite plants, a happy-looking party presented themselves. It consisted of Amy, Adelaide, Frederica, Constance, Herbert, and Mr. Middleton. The last mentioned was holding in his hand a letter which was evidently an object of interest to his companions.

"Mr. Middleton!" exclaimed Mrs. Fitzallen, "when did you arrive?"

"Only just now. Herbert and the young ladies were returning from the village when I overtook them. This letter of Alfred's, which I received this morning, must serve as my apology for trespassing upon your hospitality again so soon."

"Indeed," replied Mrs. Fitzallen, "no apology is necessary. You are very welcome. Allow me to introduce you to my sister, Mrs. Tremaine."

For a minute or so Mr. Middleton apparently forgot all but that the Adela of Mr. Fitzallen's story was before him. Eagerly he scanned every feature of the invalid, gazing upon the sweet face as though it were a lovely picture, till the dark blue eyes fell, and the evident embarrassment of his aunt attracted the notice of Herbert, who at once diverted the attention of his friend by saying—

"Now, Middleton, remember your promise to read Alfred's letter aloud. We are all attention, so please begin."

"Miss Fitzallen is very like her aunt," remarked Mr. Middleton, without appearing to notice Herbert's reminder.

"Of course, she is," replied Herbert; "she and her cousin will often, I expect, pass as sisters among strangers. But, Alfred's letter; we should be disappointed if he made his appearance before you have read it."

"But where is Alfred?" asked Mr. Middleton. "He might not be pleased if he heard of my reading his epistle aloud to you all."

"He is gone with Mr. Parkinson," replied

Herbert, "to meet a patient of the doctor who is expected at Lyth to-day. Have no scruples; Alfred knows his letters are *pro bono publico*."

Without any further delay Mr. Middleton opened the letter and read as follows:—

"THE RECTORY, *Friday*, 4 P.M.

"MY DEAR MR. MIDDLETON,—It is with great pleasure I sit down to write you these few lines, hoping they will find you quite well, as they leave me at present (V.S., *i.e.* village style). I am the letter-writer for the old women of the village whose families are scattered. As I only write at their dictation, and have but few correspondents of my own when Herbert is at home, the V.S. is more familiar to me than any other.

"Dear Mr. Middleton (V.S.), I have astounding news to tell you. The invalid traveller is no other than Mrs. Tremaine, Adela Elliott, Rhoda's sister, and our aunt. We were all delighted to see her, but I am very sorry to tell you that she is very weak. Mr. Parkinson shakes his head about her, but I am quite sure if she could survive all she has gone through, she will soon be quite well here. Of course we are all much astonished. I should not be surprised now at anything that happened, not even if you turned out to be our great uncle on my father's side. I have said enough about

my aunt, for I am longing to describe my cousin. She and Amy might be sisters, they are so much alike. But I must first tell you that the other lady traveller is Aunt Adela's daughter, the little Frederica in my father's manuscript. The nigger is a fine mulattress, unfortunately for her, a dark one. I am afraid there will be civil war in the house, for Haidée (she is the young Haidée in my father's manuscript) and Mrs. Jones, Mary, you know, are already battling about who has a right to nurse Aunt Adela. Mrs. Jones says that Aunt Adela was her young lady long before Haidée was born; but Haidée will listen to no arguments, and says she understands how to nurse Aunt Adela, having nursed her so long, better than any one else, and she shall not trust her dear mistress to the care of any one. I see no way of arranging matters but for Aunt Adela to get well and want no nursing from either of them. Amy and Adelaide have been to the village to see how poor Mrs Hodge is. She is in great grief, but now calm. Hodge was nearly frantic for hours after he heard of Willie's death, but in time he began to listen to what his poor father said to him. The funeral is to take place to-morrow morning. Hodge, the elder, is a real Christian, and perhaps it may be as he says, that this trial that has come upon his son may prove a blessing to him. POR-

little Willie !—I remain, dear Mr. Middleton, your affectionate friend,

“ALFRED FITZALLEN.”

A few minutes' silence followed the reading of Alfred's letter. Amy was the first to speak.

“How characteristic of the writer,” she said; “light hearted and full of fun one minute, and the next grave and full of pathos, if an object for his ready sympathy presents itself. But here he comes.”

“Looking as bright and handsome as any proud mother could wish,” said Mr. Middleton, and he glanced at Mrs. Fitzallen, who, with tearful eyes, yet smiling lips, was looking her welcome to her darling son. The invalid betraying signs of fatigue, the verandah was quickly deserted, the young people betook themselves to the garden, whilst Mrs. Fitzallen, stepping into the drawing-room, closed the doors of the window, and was shortly afterwards keeping watch over her sleeping sister.

A month passed away, and then the happy intelligence reached the rectory that Madame de Richelet, accompanied by her nephew (her adopted son), intended, if no unforeseen circumstance prevented, fulfilling her promise made years ago of visiting her dear Rhoda in her own home.

"We have to thank Aunt Adela for this," said Conny. "Madame de Richelet would have waited and waited at Cleremont, hoping that we should all go and see her, but she knows that Aunt Adela is not strong enough for the journey. I am sure I shall never be able to do enough to show the dear old lady how grateful I am for taking so much care of mamma. Alfred, shall we try another welcome?"

"No, Conny; you know we did our best for Herbert and Mr. Middleton, and if a welcome comes down upon Madame, she cannot creep from under it as they did; she is too infirm."

Great preparations were, however, made by the young people for the reception of one they loved, though they had not seen her. But when the long-looked-for week arrived, during which the strangers might be reasonably expected (Madame could only travel by short stages), a change for the worse had taken place in Mrs. Tremaine's health, and her state was so critical that Mr. Parkinson was seriously alarmed; she however rallied towards the end of the week, and on the day the welcome visitors arrived was able to sit up a little.

Mrs. Fitzallen, her husband, and her children, received Madame de Richelet and Henri in the porch as they alighted from their travelling carriage, and most touching was the meeting.

"So these are your sons and daughters, Rhoda," said Madame, looking fondly upon the group. "Truly, you have reason to be a proud and happy mother. But my Adela, where is she? I must see her," and, forgetful of all infirmity, the loving friend and guardian, guided by Mrs. Fitzallen, hurried to the invalid's room, and from that hour resumed the charge of the lovely creature, entrusted to her care nearly a quarter of a century before by the dying father.

To the surprise of her friends, Mrs. Tremaine again joined the family circle down-stairs, and even so far recovered as to be able to take carriage exercise; and during the long summer days, as she reclined for hours on a couch placed in front of the verandah, could receive the many kind friends of her sister, who were, for the sake of their beloved rector and his wife, deeply interested in her. At times she seemed so well and cheerful, that her too sanguine sister almost persuaded herself that she would yet recover. But Mr. Parkinson held out no hope.

"Do not," he said one day to the rector, "let your dear wife deceive herself. Mrs. Tremaine's treacherous disease—treacherous so far as outward appearance is concerned—is making sure if slow progress, and with the fall of the leaf you must all be prepared for a fatal change. She will

then perceptibly fade, and you must pray that her sufferings be not prolonged."

Summer glided into autumn, and then Mrs. Tremaine declined rapidly. She struggled through October, the month of November set in damp and chilly, and the invalid was at length wholly confined to her chamber. Though her weakness increased, her spirit grew purer and brighter day by day, as it neared the shores of eternity. Never had she been seen more cheerful than she was an hour before her death. It was evening and she lay on a couch near the fire—Madame de Richelet and Mrs. Fitzallen were alone with her. The rector was engaged in his study. The young people were all of them in the drawing-room, and the sound of the harp, accompanied by voices, reached the invalid's room. With unusual animation Mrs. Tremaine conversed with her companions for an hour, then her voice became almost inaudible. For a few minutes she lay looking at the bright blaze, and then said—

"Do you remember the last evening we spent together at Cleremont? This may, perhaps, be the last evening we shall spend together here. At Cleremont I was thinking only of future earthly pleasure, but now the glorious future prepared for me in heaven is before me."

"And which you will soon be realising, r

loved one," replied Madame de Richelet. "You will soon awaken in the home of the blessed. My turn will, I trust, be next, but we know not, we must patiently wait our Lord's bidding."

"I have not long to wait now," said Mrs. Tremaine. "More than once to-day, I have felt as though I were hovering between earth and heaven. Last night I saw in a dream my husband and my child beckoning to me. Do you remember, dear Madame, when I was dressed for Mrs. Digby's wedding? You looked earnestly at me for a few minutes, and then said, 'I shall deck you for your own bridal some day, my fair child. That day draweth near, but it is not your hand that will clothe me in my wedding garments. A white robe you may dress my mortal body in, and white flowers you may place upon my bosom, but a whiter raiment than mortal hands can weave, and fairer flowers than earth can produce, must I wear when I go, to meet my Beloved. Hush! is not that Frederica singing? Open the door, dear sister, and let me hear her sweet voice once more.'"

The last wish of the dying mother was gratified. The words which had been selected by the songstress were—

Forgive, blest shade, the tributary tear
That mourns thy exit from a world like this ;

Forgive the wish that would have kept thee here,
And stay'd thy progress to the seats of bliss.

"No more confined to grov'ling scenes of night,
No more a tenant pent in mortal clay ;
Now should we rather hail thy glorious flight,
And trace thy journey to the realms of day."

Mrs. Fitzallen leaned her face upon her hand, and her tears fell as she listened. When the voice of her niece had ceased, she looked at her sister. A faint scream burst from her lips, and she was starting from her chair when Madame de Richelet laid her hand upon her arm.

"Disturb her not, Rhoda," she said firmly ; "the soul of Adela is departing."

A gentle sigh was heard, and Adela was at rest for ever.

CHAPTER X.



Twas on a lovely June evening, ten years after the death of Mrs. Tremaine, that two elderly ladies sauntered down the path leading by the garden wall of Lyth rectory to the lich-gate of the churchyard. The day had been intensely hot, but now the sun was sinking, powerless but glorious in his bed of gold. A gentle breeze from the sea added to the refreshing coolness of the air. Very slowly the two figures, both draped in black, moved, creeping as it seemed, almost stealthily under the wall. Occasionally they stood still and listened, as children's happy voices from different parts of the rectory-garden rang through the clear atmosphere, and ever and anon a lady was heard addressing a little one near her, in gentle loving tones.

"That must be Mrs. Fitzallen speaking," said one of the ladies, "and probably the merry voices we hear are those of her grandchildren."

"What a home!" exclaimed the other lady;

"husband, children, and grandchildren!" She could proceed no further, but burst into tears.

"Nay, weep not, dear Clara," said her companion, "if you and I have no settled home here, we have one prepared for us above, in which our loved ones are waiting for us. But we must quicken our pace; if we loiter, as we are doing, it will be dusk long ere we find ourselves back at the Moir Arms."

As she said this, she took the hand of her friend, whose black crape dress, and widow's cap and veil, all crisp and new, coupled with her sad, sad face, told of her recent bereavement. In a few minutes the ladies had entered the churchyard, and were standing near a handsome marble tomb, on which was engraved—

Sacred

TO THE MEMORY OF

ADELA,

WIDOW OF THE LATE CAPTAIN TREMAINE, AND

SECOND DAUGHTER OF THE LATE COLONEL ELLIOTT,

WHO ENTERED INTO REST ON THE 20TH OF NOV. 1837.

AGED 40 YEARS.

ALSO

OF

LOUISE,

WIDOW OF THE LATE GENERAL DE RICHELET,

WHO FELL ASLEEP IN JESUS,

ON THE

1ST OF MAY 1841,

IN THE 81ST YEAR OF HER AGE.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."—REV. xiv. ~

With visible emotion the ladies gazed in silence for a few minutes upon the tomb. The newly-made widow was the first to speak.

"How little we thought thirty years ago," she said, "that we should find them sleeping together here. I would I were with them, in their peaceful bed."

"Look, Clara," returned her friend, not appearing to notice the remark, and drawing her attention to a grave close by; "this, surely, will be the grave of the Mary whose devotion to her young mistresses we admired so much. It was quite affecting her attachment to Adela Elliott. We used to say that nothing but death, we were sure, would separate Mary from her dear young lady, but it seems that even death has not divided them."

The grave was planted all over with flowers, then in full bloom, the sides and foot were, or rather are, protected by a coping of polished stone, and at the head is a handsomely-carved, upright marble slab, bearing the following inscription :—

Sacred
TO THE MEMORY OF

MARY,

FOR MANY YEARS THE FAITHFUL ATTENDANT OF THE
DAUGHTERS OF THE LATE COLONEL ELLIOTT,
AND FOR A BRIEF PERIOD THE BELOVED WIFE OF
FRANK JONES.

SHE DIED IN PERFECT PEACE, ON THE
16TH OF APRIL 1847,
AGED 62 YEARS.

AS A TRIBUTE OF LOVE AND RESPECT FOR HER TRULY
CHRISTIAN CHARACTER, AND OF GRATITUDE
FOR HER LONG AND FAITHFUL SERVICE,
THIS MONUMENT IS ERECTED BY
RHODA FITZALLEN.

"I remember both Mary and Frank quite well," said she whom her friend called Clara; "so it seems they were married. I wonder where Frank died. Not near here, or he and Mary would be resting in the same grave. This is a lovely spot, Augusta," she continued, as her eye roved round the landscape, resting now on the placid sea, then on the gorgeous sky in the west, then on the picturesque rectory and the fine old manor with their gardens, their rookeries, and thick foliage, and then upon the pretty white villas on the beach in the distance, with the village behind, and lastly returning to the peaceful churchyard, from the centre of which rose the ivy-covered church, whose chimes at that moment sent forth their sweet music from beneath

the lofty spire. And as they tolled the passing hour, the Christian mourner looked up to the venerable tower, higher still to the pinnacle of the spire, higher still to the fleecy clouds, fringed with purple and silver, and beyond them to the home of light and love, at the gate of which she would ere long lay down her burden of sorrow, and rejoice with joy unspeakable in the presence of her Redeemer.

Her friend stood silently near, reading her speaking countenance, and unwilling to disturb the reverie which gave to the pale worn face a gleam of more than earthly peace. But the lengthening shadows warned her that night was coming on. "I think, Clara," she said at last, "we must now be returning home."

"Y-e-s, h-o-m-e," was the absent reply; "we have no home here. Oh, that reminds me," she continued, as if suddenly recollecting herself, "I was thinking a few minutes since that we had better settle down at Lyth, and at last sleep together here peacefully, as do Mrs. Tremaine and Madame de Richelet. We cannot rest with our husbands in their distant graves, but we shall meet them again on the great day of awakening. Yes, we will make Lyth our home. Say yes, dear, and we will come here on the summer evenings. I love to linger among the tombs."

The countenance of the speaker had by this

time resumed its now usually plaintive expression; becoming indeed every moment more melancholy. The thoughts of both ladies were diverted by the opening of the vestry-door, and the appearance of a woman with broom and duster. The strangers at once accosted her, asking if they could look round the church.

"Certainly," was the reply, and the comely-looking matron stood aside to allow them to pass into the sacred edifice. She followed them in order that she might answer any questions they wished to ask. The first object that attracted their notice was the beautiful east window. It consists of three compartments. The centre scene is St. Peter being upheld by our Saviour on the Sea of Galilee. Beneath are the words "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe" (Psalm cxix. 117). In the compartment to the right the soldier of Christ is being clothed by an angel with the armour of God. He is in the act of receiving the "Sword of the Spirit." Beneath are the words, "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians vi. 13). In the compartment to the left hand is the soldier with vizor raised. His countenance is deadly pale, but wearing an expression of perfect peace and holy joy. He is looking upwards

towards an angel who holds in his hands a celestial crown. Beneath are the words, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day" (2 Timothy iv. 7, 8). An inscription below tells that "This window is in memory of the late Colonel Elliott, who fell at Waterloo, 18th of June 1815."

There are two other painted windows in the chancel. The strangers turned to the one on the right. The scene is Mary anointing the feet of Jesus, and wiping them with her hair. An inscription below tells that this window is in memory of Adela Tremaine. The scene of the window opposite is Mary the sister of Lazarus at the feet of Jesus. The inscription below is "In memory of Adela, the beloved wife of Colonel Elliott."

There was yet another memorial window to be seen. It is not in the chancel, but immediately over the rectory pew. With faltering lips the woman directed the ladies' attention to it. The scene is the meeting between our Saviour and Mary and Martha, after the death of Lazarus. Below is the following inscription: "In memory of Alfred Fitzallen, who died at Singapore, July 12, 1846, aged 24 years."

"Was that Mr. Fitzallen a son of the rector?" asked one of the ladies.

"He was, ma'am. He died in foreign parts, and a grievous day it was to us all when the news came that our dear young gentleman was gone. Oh, if you only knew how we all loved him. For weeks after he went away we could not speak of him without tears coming into our eyes, and when the letter came telling that he was dead, every house in the place was as if somebody was dead in it. I shall never forget the first Sunday afterwards. The church was all hung with black; the Sunday-School scholars (Mr Alfred was so fond of them all), the boys had all a bit of black crape round their hats, and the girls black ribbon on their bonnets, and not a man or woman of the congregation, gentle or simple, that was not a visitor but was in mourning.

"Mr. Middleton was staying at the rectory with his wife. She was Miss Fitzallen, Mr. Alfred's sister. He preached the funeral sermon. His text was, 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.' He broke down two or three times but went on after a sob or two. We all cried as if our hearts would break, and we dare not trust ourselves to look at the rector's pew. Many prayers had gone up that strength might be given to the almost heart-broken family, and they

keep up wonderful, and were as busy as ever visiting us all in a fortnight. But they never spoke of him to us, and they have never looked the same as they did before. He was thrown from his horse and hurt inwardly. The doctors said from the first that he could not live many days; he died very happy. His last words were, 'Tell them at home that I shall meet them in heaven.' He said to the minister an hour or two before he died, 'Few have led such a happy life as I have, but I am ready to enter the dark valley, as my Saviour is waiting for me on the other side.' He was so good; if you had only seen him when my Willie was drowned. He came day after day to see me and my poor heart-broken husband. He talked so beautiful to both me and George, and he read to us and comforted us, and George has never forgotten it, and has been a different man ever since, the best of husbands and fathers."

The speaker turned away to hide her tears. The ladies gazed with emotion for a few minutes upon the lovely painting, and involuntarily said, "Thy brother shall rise again." They then took up their position once more in the chancel, and for a while appeared to be fascinated by the scene and hour. A death-like stillness reigned around. The windows of stained glass admitted but a subdued and shadowy light, whilst the life-sized

figures stood out clear and distinct in the increasing gloom. It seemed to the two friends as though the spirits of the departed, whose memory had been so lovingly perpetuated, hovered near. The charm was at length broken by Mrs. Hodge (for the woman who acted as guide was no other than the mother we first saw in such sad grief) opening the vestry door. This the strangers took as a hint that it was time to return home. They left the church, and as the evening was now pretty far advanced, they requested Mrs. Hodge to accompany them to the beach. She willingly agreed to do so. Having secured a protector they were in no hurry to leave the churchyard, but rambled silently among the graves, as though the sacred spell that had held them in the dim and silent chancel had not been broken. At length they stood again beside the tomb of Mrs. Tremaine and Madame de Richelet.

"Poor Adela," sighed the elder of the strangers.

"Did you know her, ma'am, if I may make so bold as to ask you?" inquired Mrs. Hodge.

"I did many years ago; she died, I suppose, at the rectory."

"Yes, ma'am; Mrs. Fitzallen thought she had died many years before in foreign parts. I remember quite well when the letter came, saying she was dead. I was but a young girl, kitchen-maid at the rectory, and had black given me the same as :

the other servants. Poor Mrs. Fitzallen was in great grief for a long time, and after many years Mrs. Tremaine came like a spirit, so sudden, but she was really alive ; it was her husband, not she who had died. We all said it was like a story-book.

“But Mrs. Tremaine was in a decline. It was in the spring-time that she came, and she lived all through that summer. She was so beautiful as she lay every fine day on a couch on the lawn, and Mr. Alfred was generally lying on the grass near her, he was so very fond of his aunt. He called himself her head-nurse, he was so full of fun and so good. She saw us all we villagers, one or two at a time, and she spoke so beautifully to us, and told us she was going to her Saviour, and that we should all meet her in heaven if we were followers of Him. She gave every one of us a little book. One, one kind ; and another, another ; just as was most suitable, and told us to keep them for her sake. I often think I see her and Mr. Alfred together, she little thought he would follow her so soon.”

“Poor Mrs. Fitzallen,” said both the ladies in one breath.

“And Madame de Richelet, did she die here ? ” was the next question.

“Yes, ladies. She came from France to see Mrs. Tremaine before she died, and after Mrs.

Tremaine was buried, she stayed on and on. I do not think she could make up her mind to leave Mr. and Mrs. Fitzallen and the young people. She was so fond of them all, and they of her. She was for all the world, as if she were their grandmother. Her nephew, a fine handsome young man, came from France with her. He stayed two or three months here and then went home alone, he came again the next spring, and when he went back he took his bride with him. She was Miss Tremaine, her name was Miss Frederica, Madame de Richelet never went back to France. She said she was too infirm to travel, and must stay here the little time longer she had to live, and when she died they must lay her in Mrs. Tremaine's tomb. She lived to see a great-niece, who was named Adela Elliott de Richelet. Mr. and Mrs. de Richelet brought the baby from France. I happened to be at the rectory in Mrs. Jones' room when they arrived, and I shall never forget Mrs. Fitzallen bringing the baby, it was as fair as wax-work, with a little curl like floss-silk on its forehead into the room and laying it on Mrs. Jones' knee, saying, 'There is another Miss Adela for you, Mary.' Oh, how Mrs. Jones kissed and fondled and cried over that baby, and Mrs. Fitzallen and I cried too. Miss Adela is a sweet little girl, now about seven years old. She is the image her mother, who was the image of her mot'

Mr. and Mrs. de Richelet have four children. Miss Adela almost lives at the rectory. I believe she will do so altogether soon, for they say that she and Mr. Herbert's little girl are to have one governess between them. Mr. Herbert married Miss Moir. He is his father's curate, and lives at Newstead. The squire and Mrs. Moir will not part with their daughter and their grandchildren, so they all live together. When our dear rector is gone, Mr Herbert will be rector. Mr. Moir can give the rectory to whoever he has a mind to, and of course he will give it to his daughter's husband. Miss Constance is the only one left at home, she is the picture of what Mrs. Fitzallen was at her age. My mother says that when she comes into the village with her maid behind her, carrying a basketful of nice things for the sick and old people, it might be Mrs. Fitzallen just as she was when she was married."

"Does Mrs. Fitzallen enjoy good health?" asked one of the ladies.

"Excellent, though she has looked much older of late. But if you please she is Lady Fitzallen now, not Mrs. Sir Alfred died six months ago, and as he was never married, his brother, our rector, became a Sir and Mrs. Fitzallen a Lady. We villagers have had hard work to get used to it, and many of the old people still hold out against it, particularly

Mr. and Mrs. Fitzallen tell us to call them what

we have been always accustomed to, if we would rather, and we would much rather keep to the old names, no one can ever be in our eyes like Mr. and Mrs. Fitzallen. But we shall have to give way in the end, or offend the quality on the Beach, who seem quite pleased with it, and always tell us of it when we say Mr. or Mrs. You will think me very bold, ladies, for talking so freely to you."

"Not at all," was the reply. "We are deeply interested in all you say, and are much obliged to you for the information you have given us. Is it possible that that is Mrs. or rather Lady Fitzallen coming towards the churchyard?" said the elder of the ladies.

Her companions at once looked in the direction of the church-walk, and saw a tall lady in black, followed by her maid, a mulattress.

"It is Lady Fitzallen," said Mrs. Hodge, "she always comes about this time in the evening, generally a little earlier, and rambles among the tombs, or spends a half hour alone in the church. She never looks unhappy, but her step is slower than it used to be, and when she speaks to us she does it in such a gentle way. The dark woman behind her is Haidée, she came with Mrs. Tremaine from foreign parts, and is made much of by all at the rectory."

By this time Lady Fitzallen had entered the Lichgate. With heightened colour one of the ladies.

she whom her friend called Augusta, advanced a step with outstretched hand, but her companion holding her back, whispered, "Not now, this is a sacred hour with her, to-morrow."

Lady Fitzallen seeing strangers, loitered in the path, giving the former an opportunity of deciding in their minds, that the calm pale face with its expression of perfect peace, the soft hazel eyes, and sweet mouth, bore little or no resemblance to the radiant, but sometimes haughty beauty, who had for a brief month fascinated a small and select circle in Brussels, in the ever-to-be-remembered summer of 1815.

Lady Fitzallen was at length compelled to pass the strangers, and as she did so, she bowed to them, her eyes at the same time meeting their earnest gaze. For a moment a startled inquiring look flashed from those large and still speaking eyes. She hastily glanced from one face to another, and then the drooping of the lids and the slight colour which tinged her cheeks, told that she had failed to recognise friends. And so she passed on towards the vestry door, whilst Haidée, who carried a small watering-can, turned out of the path and commenced her loving task performed each evening, that of tending the flowers on the grave of her former rival.

It was evidently Lady Fitzallen's intention to at once enter the church, but on the doorstep she

raised her hand to her forehead as if to collect her thoughts, whilst with the other hand she firmly grasped the handle of the door as though to steady herself. After the space of a minute or so she turned round and walked hastily towards the tomb of her sister. She stood by it apparently carefully reading the epitaph, and then the strangers heard her say to her attendant, "I will not go into the church to-night, Haidée. You have watered the flowers, now we will go, I do not feel very well, and would rather return to the rectory at once."

She again passed the strangers, her face was paler than before, and a little agitated. With an irresistible impulse one of the ladies took her hand, and holding it tightly, exclaimed,

"Have you quite forgotten me, Rhoda?"

For a moment Lady Fitzallen looked at the speaker, then said with a quivering voice, "Can it possibly be Mrs. Digby?"

A loving kiss was the answer.

"And this is——," Lady Fitzallen paused, for she had noted the deep mourning Mrs. Digby's companion wore.

"Mrs. Treversham," said Mrs. Digby, at the same time introducing her friend, and finishing Lady Fitzallen's sentence.

The latter warmly pressed the hand of the newly-made widow, looking her sympathy, but not venturing a word on the painful subject.

"I did not recognise either of you," she said. "But as I passed you a few minutes ago, Brussels and all its horrors during that terrible week rose before me, and I felt too faint to enter the church. But we must bury the past for the present. When did you arrive, and where are you staying?"

"We only arrived this afternoon," replied Mrs. Digby, "and are staying at the Moir Arms. Clara proposes that our wanderings should end here, and that we should make Lyth our home."

"But you must not think of returning to the hotel," said Lady Fitzallen. "The rectory must be your home so long as you are satisfied to make it such. I will have no denial, so not a word."

The three friends had by this time left the churchyard, followed by Haidée. Lady Fitzallen, now as full of animation and energy as of yore, called her maid to her side and hastily gave a few directions touching the sending for the luggage from the hotel, preparing rooms for her guests, &c., bidding her hasten on before them and lose as little time as possible.

"No difficulty in recognising you now, Rhoda," said Mrs. Digby, as the former opened the rectory gate, and with beaming eyes welcomed her friends to her beautiful and peaceful home.

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